

Jane Austen Society

COLLECTED REPORTS
1966 - 1975

**Collected Reports
1966-1975**

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**Collected Reports
of the Jane Austen Society
1966-1975**

With an Introduction by Elizabeth Jenkins

The Jane Austen Society

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INTRODUCTION

to

THE COLLECTED REPORTS OF THE JANE AUSTEN SOCIETY

The Jane Austen Society was founded by the late Dorothy Darnell in 1940. Its object was to gain possession of Chawton Cottage where Jane Austen lived from 1809 till her death in 1817, and to make it available as a showplace and museum. The house at this time was let in three tenements, the rent of each tenement being half-a-crown a week. It was the property of Major Edward Knight of Chawton House, the descendant of Jane Austen's brother Edward who had taken the name of Knight on the death of Mrs. Thomas Knight who had made over to him the properties of Godmersham in Kent and Chawton in Hampshire.

Edward Knight gave Chawton Cottage to his mother and his sisters Cassandra and Jane, after the death of his father the Rev. George Austen. The house stands at a junction of the London, Winchester and Portsmouth Roads, a short distance from the park gates of Chawton House. It is L-shaped; the long arm, lying parallel with the garden and the Winchester road, joins the short arm to form the large room used by the Austens as a living-room; the rest of the arm runs into a series of small unidentified rooms. The short arm fronts the village street, and this is the important part of the house as it contains the rooms identified by contemporary description.

Jane Austen's nephew Edward Austen-Leigh, the son of her eldest brother James, the Rector of Steventon, published his *Memoir of Jane Austen* in 1870. This, compiled from the recollections of his sister Caroline Austen and himself, is, apart from the brief notice contributed by Jane Austen's brother Henry to the posthumous edition of *Northanger Abbey* and *Persuasion*, the only memoir written by someone who had known her. Edward Austen-Leigh describes the house as it was in his aunt's life-time. It was said once to have been an inn, its situation, the number of its small rooms and the extent of its outbuildings, on two sides of a large gravel yard, supporting this idea. He says: "A good-sized entrance and two sitting-rooms made the length of the house, all intended to look upon the road", but he adds that Edward Knight blocked up the existing drawing room window and cut another looking into the garden. This confirms that the large room on the left as one faces the house was the Austens' living room and that on the right of the front door, the dining parlour. The degree to which the latter was overlooked explains the blocking-up of the living-room window. Mrs. Thomas Knight, writing on October 26th, 1809, says: "I heard of the Chawton party looking very comfortable at breakfast from a gentleman who was travelling by their door in a postchaise ten days ago."

The *Memoir* is the source of the famous description of Jane Austen's method of writing. "She had no separate study to retire to, and most of the work must have been done in the general sitting-room . . . she was careful that her occupation should not be suspected by servants or visitors or any person beyond her own family party. She wrote upon small sheets of paper which could be easily put away or covered with a piece of blotting-paper. There was, between the front door and the offices, a swing-door which creaked when it was opened, but she objected to having this little inconvenience removed because it gave her notice when someone was coming."

Where this vanished door was sited is now difficult to decide. The front of the house shows that the position of the front door has at some time been altered. The present front door opens into the dining-parlour, or rather into a narrow passage made out of the latter by a partition. John White of Chawton who died in 1921 aged one hundred, said: "The front door of Jane Austen's house used to open into a sitting room, but cannot recollect whether it was the dining or the drawing room. The partition was put up afterwards when the house was turned into cottages for labourers." (See *My Aunt Jane Austen* by Caroline Austen, printed for the Jane Austen Society, 1952). This was done after Cassandra Austen's death in 1845. It would seem therefore as if some alteration had been made between 1817 and 1845. Before 1817, according to Edward Austen Leigh there had been "a good sized entry", which according to John White had disappeared after 1821. There is now a small room with a sash window overlooking the street, between the living room and the dining room; this was presumably made out of the entry, and the front door moved to clear it.

The *Memoir* says and John White confirms that after 1845 the house became labourers' tenements; it continued in this occupation for over a hundred years, but it had always enjoyed some degree of celebrity as the house in which Jane Austen had re-written *Sense and Sensibility* and *Pride and Prejudice*, and composed *Mansfield Park*, *Emma* and *Persuasion*.

A wooden tablet on the front of the house bears an inscription, undated, commemorating the fact that Jane Austen lived there from 1809-1817, and saying: "Her admirers in this country and in America have united to erect this tablet."

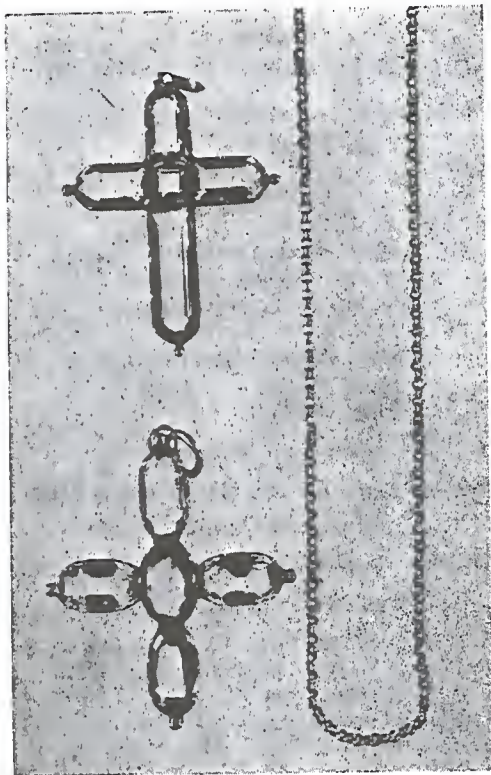
The object of the Society was gained in 1947 when the late Edward Carpenter, J.P., bought the house for £3,000, creating the Jane Austen Memorial Trust, to be administered in memory of his son Lieutenant John Philip Carpenter, killed in action July 1944.

The house was formally opened to the public at a General Meeting on July 23rd, 1949. The Society holds an Annual General Meeting each July, addressed by a guest speaker, and publishes an Annual Report.

ELIZABETH JENKINS

THE JANE AUSTEN SOCIETY

Report for the Year, 1966



The "Topaze" Crosses and Gold Chain, given to Cassandra and Jane Austen by their brother Charles in 1801.

THE JANE AUSTEN SOCIETY

(Founded in 1940 by Dorothy G. Darnell)

President :

The Lord David Cecil, C.H.

Vice-Presidents :

His Grace The Duke of Wellington, K.G.
T. Edward Carpenter, Esq., B.A., LL.B., J.P.
John Gore, Esq., C.V.O.

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Lt.-Col. Sir William V. Makins, Bt.

Vice-Chairman and Honorary Secretary :

Sir Hugh Smiley, Bt.

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Miss A. B. Darnell
Miss Elizabeth Jenkins
Hugh B. Powell, Esq.
Mrs. K. A. Robbins
Mrs. Rupert Shervington
Lady Smiley
Lady Stirling

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Honorary Auditors :

Messrs. Sheen, Stickland & Co., Alton, Hants.

Trustees of the Jane Austen Memorial Trust :

T. Edward Carpenter, Esq., B.A., LL.B., J.P. (Chairman)
Mrs. Catherine L. M. Carpenter
Francis E. Carpenter, Esq.
Thomas F. Carpenter, Esq.

THE JANE AUSTEN SOCIETY

Report for the Year, 1966

Membership

Seventy-eight new members joined during the year, of whom fifteen became Life Members. In addition, ten old members became Life Members. One hundred and twelve members live in the U.S.A. Total membership is now 1080.

Members are reminded that subscriptions are due on 1st January, and that this Report is the only reminder that they will receive. The Hon. Secretary would much appreciate prompt payment of the 5/- Annual Subscription, and will gladly provide a Banker's Order Form.

Annual General Meeting, 1966

The Annual General Meeting was held at Chawton House, by kind permission of Major and Mrs. Edward Knight, on Saturday, 16th July. Lord David Cecil presided, and over 500 members and their friends were present.

Opening the meeting, the President welcomed those who were present at his first appearance as presiding chairman. He asked that the minutes of the last Annual Meeting, which had been published in the Annual Report, should be taken as read. He said that the idea of holding the 1967 Annual Meeting at Winchester had been abandoned.

The Hon. Secretary presented the report for 1965. This was seconded by Mrs. Dawson, and carried.

The Hon. Treasurer presented the accounts. It was proposed by Mr. Innes, seconded by Mr. Bridge, and carried, that these be adopted.

Sir William Makins proposed the re-election of Lord David Cecil as President, and of The Duke of Wellington, Mr. T. Edward Carpenter and Mr. John Gore as Vice-Presidents. This was seconded by Mr. Hubert Howard, and carried.

The President proposed the re-election of the Committee en bloc. This was carried.

The meeting was addressed by Dr. C. V. Wedgwood, C.B.E., whose theme was 'Jane Austen and the Tragic Muse.'

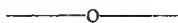
A vote of thanks was proposed by Mr. Brian Southam, seconded by Mrs. Hay, and carried.

The President closed the meeting by thanking Major and Mrs.

Knight for lending Chawton House for the meeting. Tea was provided in aid of Chawton Church funds, when over £80 was raised.

Annual General Meeting, 1967

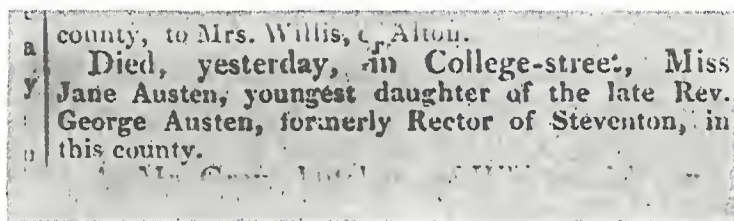
The Annual General Meeting will be held at Chawton House, by kind permission of Major and Mrs. Edward Knight, on Saturday, 15th July, at 3 p.m. The meeting will be addressed by Mr. John Bayley, Fellow and Tutor of New College, Oxford, who will speak on "Emma, and her Critics."



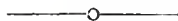
1817 - 1967

The following notice is reproduced, with permission, from the Hampshire Chronicle of 21st July, 1817.

Winchester, Saturday, July 19th.



Tuesday, 18th July is the 150th Anniversary of Jane Austen's death. To mark this occasion a wreath will be laid on her tomb in Winchester Cathedral at the close of Evensong, which begins at 5.15 p.m. No tickets will be needed.



The "Topaze" Crosses

The photograph of the "Topaze" crosses and gold chain on the cover of this Report is reproduced by permission of Mr. C. B. Hogan, who also owns the letter (Chapman No. 38), written by Jane Austen to Cassandra, from Bath on 26th May, 1801, which



Edward Knight, brother of Jane Austen, who inherited the Godmersham and Chawton Estates

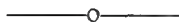
Jane Austen Memorial Trust

authenticates them. They were given to Cassandra and Jane by their brother Charles, then serving in the *Endymion*. In this letter, Jane writes—

“He has received £30 for his share of the privateer and expects £10 more—but of what avail is it to take prizes if he lays out the produce in presents to his sisters. He has been buying gold chains and Topaze crosses for us;—he must be well scolded.”

The privateer was the *Scipio*. The photograph shows the actual size of the crosses. Unfortunately it is not known which sister owned which cross. They came into the possession of Miss Jane and Miss Florence Austen, descendants of Admiral Charles Austen and were sold in the 1920's.

In **Mansfield Park** Fanny Price has an amber cross which her sailor brother William had brought from Sicily, and is given a gold chain, on which to hang it, by Edmund Bertram.



St. Paul's, Covent Garden



Print of Church

October 26th, 1813 “..... Edward and I settled that you went to St. Paul's, Covent Garden, on Sunday.” Thus wrote Jane Austen to her sister about a month after she had herself left Henrietta Street, apparently still in the company of her brother



Passage

Edward Knight and his family. When she wrote, she was enjoying a long visit to them at Godmersham Park, before returning to her home at Chawton.

Mrs. Austen had been left probably in the company of their friend and inmate, Martha Lloyd. Cassandra, we see from Jane's letter to her, was in her turn paying a visit, presumably her first, to her brother Henry at his new home over his bank near Covent Garden—No. 10, Henrietta Street. Jane Austen in her letter was speculating about Cassandra's movements, and it seems as if she and Edward were both expecting her to go to the morning service at St. Paul's, Covent Garden, because they knew it was the church to which Henry usually went. I do not think that the few days they had just spent in Henrietta Street included a Sunday; but on her next visit to Henry, the following March, (again spent mostly in the company of Edward and his young daughters) Jane breaks off a letter to Cassandra in order to go to church with the others, and then resumes it as if there had been only a comparatively short interval She says no word about the church at all, from which omission I deduce that, as Jane and her brother Edward had "settled" on October 26th, Cassandra had been to the church already.

This beautiful old church was very conveniently near, being reached by a little passage in Henrietta Street, directly opposite

No. 10. This passage, shown in the accompanying photograph appears in John Rocques' London Map of 1746, and leads directly to the west door of the church. The east porch, which the architect Inigo Jones called his "Tuscan Portico", has become famous as part of the setting for "Pygmalion," and "My Fair Lady." It also saw the performance of *Punch and Judy* witnessed by Samuel Pepys in May, 1662.

"The Handsomest Barn in England," is Inigo Jones' well-known description of the church which he had designed at the request of the Earl of Bedford in 1663. "We are farmers," said the Earl, "so build us a barn to worship in."

Mrs. Harrison, the Honorary Treasurer of the church, has found an entry of marriage for 1821 of a John Austen, widower, who married Mary Elizabeth Springett; but I have not been able to find any connection for it with Jane Austen's family.

St. Paul's, Covent Garden, has become known as "The Actors' Church," because so many of that profession are buried there, including Ellen Terry. Whether it was so called in Jane Austen's day, I do not know. The Austen and Knight families certainly made the most of their proximity to the theatres during brief visits in 1813 and 1814; going to at least a dozen plays. It must be remembered however, that in those days it was normal for as many as three plays to be included in one evening's programme. Their keenness about the stage recalls Catherine Morland's words in *Northanger Abbey*: "She feared that amongst the many perfections of the family, a fondness for plays was not to be ranked; but perhaps it was because they were habituated to the finer performances of the London stage"

A little further on she says "I have just learned to love a hyacinth I am naturally indifferent about flowers." "But now you love a hyacinth," says Henry Tilney. "So much the better. You have gained a new source of enjoyment, and it is as well to have as many holds upon happiness as possible."

In the Prayers which are printed at the end of Vol. VI of Dr. Chapman's Oxford edition of Jane Austen, she thanks God for "Every hour of safety, health and peace, of domestic comfort and innocent enjoyment." These prayers, evidently written for family prayers in the evening, probably on the occasions when Cassandra was away, show that Jane Austen's religion was not a perfunctory thing, but that, feeling deeply the responsibility, she gave it the best efforts of her heart and mind.

Winifrid Watson.

“Sophia Sentiment:” Jane Austen ?

Famous authors do not invariably begin as infant prodigies and their schoolroom scribblings, if they indulge in them, are sometimes judged to be inferior in wit and promise to the comparable juvenilia of writers who never rose above mediocrity. Such early flights are rightly considered not on intrinsic merit but as evidence of the gradual development of an individual style; as the lower rungs of a long ladder.

If any body of men and women has a duty to throw new light on the dark places in the early years of Jane Austen, the Jane Austen Society is certainly involved in that duty. Accordingly it is well worth examining carefully an interesting suggestion put forward by Sir Zachary Cope in the Summer 1966 number of **The Book Collector**.

Very briefly summarised, Sir Zachary's facts and theories are as follows :

On 28th March, 1789, in the ninth number of “**The Loiterer**,” an undergraduate weekly founded and edited by James Austen, Jane Austen's eldest brother, there appeared the following long letter signed “Sophia Sentiment.”

“Sir, I write to inform you that you are very much out of my good graces, and that, if you do not mend your manners, I shall soon drop your acquaintance. You must know, Sir, I am a great reader and not to mention some hundred volumes of Novels and Plays have, in the last two summers, actually got through all the entertaining papers of our most celebrated periodical writers, from the **Tatler** and **Spectator** to the **Microcosm** and the **Olla Podrida**. Indeed I love a periodical work beyond anything, especially those in which one meets with a great many stories and where the papers are not too long.

I assure you my heart beat with joy when I first heard of your publication, which I immediately sent for, and have taken in ever since. I am sorry, however to say it, but really, Sir, I think it the stupidest work of the kind I ever saw: not but that some of the papers are well written; but then your subjects are so badly chosen, that they never interest one—only conceive, in eight papers, not one sentimental story about love and honour, and all that—not one Eastern Tale full of Bashas and Hermits, Pyramids and Mosques—no, not even an allegory or dream have yet made their appearance in the **Loiterer**. Why, my dear Sir,—what do you think we care about the way in which Oxford men spend their time and money—we, who have enough to do to spend our own ? For my part, I never, but once, was at Oxford in my life and I am sure I never wish to go there again—they dragged me through

so many dismal chapels, dusty libraries, and *greasy halls, that it gave me the vapours for two days afterwards. As for your last paper, indeed, the story was good enough, but there was no love and no lady in it, at least no young lady; and I wonder how you could be guilty of such an omission, especially when it could have been so easily avoided. Instead of retiring to Yorkshire, he might have fled into France, and there, you know, you might have made him fall in love with a French *paysanne* who might have turned out to be some great person. Or you might have let him set fire to a convent, and carry off a nun, whom he might afterwards have converted, or anything of that kind, just to have created a little bustle, and made the story more interesting.

In short, you have never yet dedicated any one number to the amusement of our sex, and have taken no more notice of us, than if you thought, like the Turks, we had no souls. From all which I do conclude, that you are neither more nor less than some old Fellow of a College, who never saw anything of the world beyond the limits of the University, and never conversed with a female, except your bed-maker and laundress.

I therefore give you this advice, which you will follow as you value our favour or your own reputation—Let us hear no more of your Oxford Journals, your Homelys and Cockneys; but send them about their business, and get a new set of correspondents, from among the young of both sexes, but particularly ours; and let us see some nice, affecting stories, relating the misfortunes of two lovers, who died suddenly, just as they were going to church. Let the lover be killed in a duel, or lost at sea, or you may make him shoot himself, just as you please; and as for his mistress, she will of course go mad; or if you will, you may kill the lady, and let the lover run mad; only remember, whatever you do, that your hero and heroine must possess a great deal of feeling, and have very pretty names. If you think fit to comply with this my injunction, you may expect to hear from me again, and perhaps I may even give you a little assistance—but, if not—may your work be condemned to the pastry-cook's shop and may you always continue a bachelor, and be plagued with a maiden sister to keep house for you.

Yours, as you behave,
Sophia Sentiment."

In Sir Zachary Cope's opinion, there is reason to believe that Jane Austen, at that time 13½ years of age, may have been the author of the letter and he has very briefly summarised his circumstantial evidence as follows :

**Sir Zachary claims that the word "greasy" occurs in only one other place in Jane Austen's writings, and that happens to be in one of the earliest of the Juvenilia—Frederic and Elfrida Chapter the Second—where it is spelt "greazy."*

"This letter could not have been written by James or Henry Austen whose style was stilted and never exhilarating. It must have been written by a young woman or even girl, for the boasting and wit are rather girlish. Moreover the impertinence is such that no editor would have taken it seriously from anyone but a close relative or friend.

The claim about wide reading fits in exactly with Henry Austen's statement about Jane's reading that 'it is difficult to say at what age she was not intimately acquainted with the merits and defects of the best essays and novels in the English language.' The gibe at Oxford would be natural for one who had undergone her first schooling away from home in that city. **Olla Podrida** was a journal edited from Oxford in 1787 and 1788 and would certainly be well known to James Austen and his family, but to few young people outside the Oxford circle.

The suggestions made for the improvement of the **Loiterer** read like a burlesque of the morbid sentiment prevalent in novels of that period, a type of writing at that very time being satirized in Jane Austen's **Love and Freindship**, a tale in which the chief sufferer from excess of sentiment was called Sophia.

To sum up. The letter signed by Sophia Sentiment reads like the composition of an irresponsible, precocious and rather 'saucy' girl, widely read for her age, critical both of maudlin sentiment and of dull sententious prose, and ready even to assist the editors in their unrewarding task. If, as I think probable, the writer were Jane Austen, it is likely that the letter was written in collusion with Henry Austen who had written the article she criticized. V.Z.C."

Well, there it is—schoolroom fooling, moderately entertaining! Who was the writer of that near two-century-old squib in a long forgotten ephemeral publication?

We know something of the way of life at Steventon; of the Christmas plays in the house or barn and of the house full to bursting with young people. In a letter of November 16th, 1787, Eliza de Feuillade, writing to Philadelphia Walter, gives us a pattern of the programme for Christmas, 1787.

We know that the child Jane had been scribbling from at least her 13th year, that her talent for schoolroom satire was already acknowledged, that she was a voracious reader of books in her father's library and of periodicals and plays brought home by family and friends. It is no outrageous assumption that during the Christmas vacation of December, '88, the undergraduate brother would return home for the junketing with plays for the choosing and, as Editor of **The Loiterer** (with copy to mug up for future issues) would bring with him the issues of his rivals. **Microcosm** and **Olla Podrida** were in that category; both had

ceased publication. Essays from the former had been reprinted. It is quite probable that the "Sophia Sentiment" letter was concocted for a forthcoming number with the help of the family and in deference to chaffing criticism of the paper's 'dullness.' Sir Zachary's theory, certainly, conjures up a human and a charming picture of family life at Steventon when the children were all in their 'teens. We could do with more of such pictures. Both 'Sophia' and 'Sentiment' are *noms de plume* very apt to Jane's curiously continuous line of satire. *Love and Freindship* bears on its title page the date June 1790. She was then 14½ years of age. If the bulk of her known skits date from her 15th year, she was no beginner in '89. The barb of her satire against the absurdities of sentimental novels was at work from the schoolroom right into her maturity as an author.

Sir Zachary's circumstantial evidence is quite impressive, though no judge would direct his jury to convict on it.

I venture to offer it one more link in the chain. Lord David Cecil, in his 1964 address at our Annual Meeting, quoted *inter alia* from a skit in Jane's juvenilia in which two young women, *Sophia* and *Laura*, enjoy a romantic adventure in Wales, during which their husbands, after a phaeton upset, are found weltering in blood. "Sophia shrieked and fainted, I screamed and instantly *ran mad* For an hour and a quarter did we continue in this unfortunate situation, Sophia fainting every minute and I *running mad* as often." Throw in that in more than one of these skits Jane insisted on *pretty* names for romantic heroines [e.g. "Her name was Bridget nothing therefore could be expected from her"], and it is quite interesting to compare the above quotation with the following cited words in the letter to **The Loiterer** :

"Let the lover be killed in a duel or lost at sea . . . and as for his mistress, she will of course *go mad*, or if you will, you may kill the mistress and let the lover *run mad* only remember that your hero and heroine must possess a good deal of feeling and have very *pretty names*." All italics are mine.

Non-proven, no doubt. But even if the writing of the two passages is separated in time, the similarity between them is remarkable and there is a case for the theory that the same hand penned both—for what it be worth.

John Gore.

A Footnote to "Sophia Sentiment"

James Austen appears to have edited and largely written "The Loiterer" from 1789—1790.

Edward Austen-Leigh says: ("Memoir of Jane Austen") that Jane Austen began the re-writing of *Sense and Sensibility* in 1797, but that the original draft was written "earlier:" presumably before October, 1796, since that was the month when she began

First Impressions, the first draft of **Pride and Prejudice**. Mr Austen-Leigh adds that "it is probable" that a good deal of the first draft of **Sense and Sensibility** was retained.

In Chapter 34 of **Sense and Sensibility**, Marianne Dashwood exclaims: "'What is Miss Morton to us? Who knows, or cares, for her?'" Whereupon: 'Mrs. Ferrars looked exceedingly angry and pronounced in retort this bitter philippic: "Miss Morton is Lord Morton's daughter."'

In No. 58 of *The Loiterer*, dated Saturday, 6th March, 1790, the paper says that three Oxford men, the writer, Dr. Villars and Mr. Sensitive, take a walk towards "Joe Pullen's Tree," which has become a landmark since the falling down of the Magadalen Oak. The scene is described by someone accustomed to study the picturesque :- the sun, appearing through a cloudy sky, lit up the projecting points of Magdalen and Merton towers, while "the woody hills of Wytham, rising boldly from behind a flat country, threw over the whole background a broad mass of dark shadow." The companions are discussing Oxford friendships and the value of university education in after-life. They are interrupted by "a large party of very dashing men," riding by on "cropt ponies, and followed by no inconsiderable number of tarriers (*sic*), of all sorts, sizes and colours." The young men's noisy conversation makes it clear they have come from a badger-baiting on Bullingdon Green.

Mr. Sensitive exclaims: "There is a specimen of the manner in which the present members of the University spend their time!" He said a good deal more, and "having pronounced this bitter philippic, he looked round with the triumphant air of a man who does not think his arguments very readily answered."

Sir Zachary Cope's discovery of the letter of "Sophia Sentiment" and his persuasive suggestion that it was written by Jane Austen, makes it interesting to note her use in **Sense and Sensibility** of the phrase "pronounced this bitter philippic." It does at least imply that at fifteen years old, she read her brother's papers with eager interest, since one of his sentences remained in her memory, to be produced brilliantly in a scene of her own.

Elizabeth Jenkins.



David Garrick between Comedy and Tragedy.

*From the portrait by Sir Joshua Reynolds, reproduced by permission of the
Hon. Jacob Rothschild.*

Jane Austen and the Tragic Muse

Some years before Jane Austen was born, Sir Joshua Reynolds painted a famous picture of his friend David Garrick between the rival Muses of Tragedy and Comedy. Comedy, a frivolous and slightly dishevelled young blonde, is tugging him by the right arm, while Tragedy, a forbidding dark lady lays a hand on his left arm and raises an admonitory forefinger towards higher things. Garrick himself wears a ruefully humorous expression—a 'how happy could I be with either' expression—but he looks as though he thought Comedy the more attractive.

Can we imagine Jane Austen in this position? Hardly. Her choice and temperament were clearly for Comedy. When she wrote a famous letter to the Rev. James Clarke in which she tactfully explained that her talent was unsuited to the composition of a historical novel in honour of the House of Coburg, she modestly suggested that her scope was limited. Her famous phrase, comparing her art to that of the miniaturist painting on two inches of ivory, is perfect in its context. But I doubt whether her admirers regard it as a fair description of her work. She has a depth of human observation far beyond the delicate art of the miniaturist. There is nothing small about her books except their social range. She very wisely never goes outside the world she knows. Her upper limits of aristocracy and wealth are Sir Thomas Bertram, Lady Catherine de Burgh and Mr. Darcy. Her lower limits reach to Mr. Robert Martin of Abbey Mill Farm, and to those young women of rather uncertain social background, the sweet and silly Harriet Smith, or the far from sweet and not at all silly Lucy Steele.

Within this discreetly limited circle she deals with basic human problems, with love and passion, loyalty, friendship, duty, jealousy and self-sacrifice.

For the writer who truly studies human nature there is no clear choice between comedy and tragedy. Jane Austen is so excellent a writer of comedy precisely because she has a keen sense of the tragic threads with which the fabric of life is interwoven. If these are rarely visible on the surface of her work, they are present in the structure.

Her manners as a writer are as reticent as her sex and upbringing dictated, but this reticence, this delicacy—to use an expressive word more fashionable in her time than in ours—enhances the occasionally tragic content of certain passages in her work.

Take for instance the two or three pages in which the past

history of Anne Elliot is placed before us in Chapter IV of **Persuasion**. Chapter IV—that in itself is significant. A lesser artist would have introduced Anne, the heroine and the most interesting character, at the outset. But Jane Austen moves in towards Anne slowly, starting with the revealingly funny account of her father “Sir Walter Elliot of Kellynch Hall, in Somersetshire, a man who for his own amusement, never took up any book but the *Baronetage*; there he found occupation in an idle hour and consolation in a distressed one.”

It is only after we have had Sir Walter, his life, his interests, his intention of letting his house, fully set down for our interest and amusement, that Jane Austen breaks off the narrative to explain the predicament of Anne in a straightforward, economical, deliberately low-toned chapter, which, as much by its position in the book as by any direct statement, establishes the fine character of Anne and the nature of her tragedy, her broken engagement to Captain Wentworth, in almost austere contrast to the false values with which she is surrounded.

Another example of this interlining of comedy with sadness is the arrival of Fanny Price, aged 10, and her introduction to her uncle, aunt and sophisticated cousins at Mansfield Park :

Afraid of everybody, ashamed of herself, and longing for the home she had left, she knew not how to look up, and could scarcely speak to be heard, or without crying. Mrs. Norris had been talking to her the whole way from Northampton of her wonderful good fortune, and the extraordinary degree of gratitude and good behaviour which it ought to produce, and her consciousness of misery was therefore increased by the idea of its being a wicked thing for her not to be happy. The fatigue too of so long a journey became soon no trifling evil. In vain were the well-meant condescensions of Sir Thomas and all the officious prognostications of Mrs. Norris that she would be a good girl; in vain did Lady Bertram smile and make her sit on the sofa with herself and Pug, and vain was even the sight of a gooseberry tart towards giving her comfort; she could scarcely swallow two mouthfuls before tears interrupted her, and sleep seeming to be her likeliest friend, she was taken to finish her sorrows in bed.

“This is not a very promising beginning” said Mrs. Norris when Fanny had left the room.

This scene is given the outward appearance of comedy by the insensitive behaviour of Mrs. Norris, the vague smiling of Lady Bertram, the presence of Pug and the gooseberry tart. But the reality at the centre is the unhappiness of a shy and lonely child, who is suffering additional distress on account of an acute

feeling of guilt. There was very little about psychology that Jane Austen did not know.

In the next few pages Fanny's devotion to Edmund, deep on her side from the beginning but much lighter on his, is exquisitely indicated in the little comedy of his helping Fanny to write a letter to her brother William.

"But, cousin, will it go to the post?"

'Yes, depend upon me it shall; it shall go with the other letters; and, as your uncle will frank it, it will cost William nothing.'

'My uncle!' repeated Fanny, with a frightened look.

'Yes, when you have written the letter, I will take it to my Father to frank.' Fanny thought it a bold measure but offered no further resistance."

One further example of this interaction of comedy and tragedy, and one of the most subtle, comes at the end of **Pride and Prejudice**. Elizabeth has been sent for by her father because Mr. Darcy has asked him for her hand in marriage. Mr. Bennet who is still unaware of Darcy's generosity to Wickham and Lydia or of Darcy's real character opens the conversation with an amazed question "Are you out of your senses to be accepting this man? Have you not always hated him?" Elizabeth tries to explain that her feelings have altered but Mr. Bennet is at first unconvinced and Jane Austen puts into his mouth words of surprising bitterness:

"Or, in other words, you are determined to have him. He is rich, to be sure, and you may have more fine clothes and fine carriages than Jane. But will they make you happy?"

'Have you any other objection,' said Elizabeth, 'than your belief in my indifference.'

'None at all. We know him to be a proud, unpleasant sort of man; but this would be nothing if you really liked him.'

'I do, I do like him,' she replied, with tears in her eyes; 'I love him. Indeed he has no improper pride. He is perfectly amiable. You do not know what he really is; then pray do not pain me by speaking of him in such terms.'

'Lizzy,' said her father, 'I have given him my consent. He is the kind of man, indeed, to whom I should never dare refuse anything which he condescended to ask. I now give it to *you*, if you are resolved on having him. But let me advise you to think better of it. I know your disposition, Lizzy. I know that you could neither be happy nor respectable unless you truly esteemed your

husband—unless you looked upon him as a superior. Your lively talents would place you in the greatest danger in an unequal marriage. You could scarcely escape discredit and misery. My child, let me not have the grief of seeing you unable to respect your partner in life. *You know not what you are about.*”

The genius of *that* passage lies in the reticence of father and daughter about the person who is in both their minds. It is Mrs. Bennet, irresistably comic for most of the book, who here, unarmed and unseen, falls like a dark shadow between them.

For what could otherwise induce Mr. Bennet to accuse his favourite and most intelligent daughter of wanting to marry for money, for finer clothes and finer carriages than her sister Jane? It is an absurd accusation and it is bitter because it is wrenched out of poor Mr. Bennet’s heart because he suddenly sees Elizabeth, the child who most resembles him, making an error of judgment about marriage equal to his own. Is she going to marry wealth without respect for anything else, as he had rashly married the pretty but irredeemably silly Mrs. Bennet? It is partly because he sees himself in her that he utters this bitter warning but partly also because, for a moment, he sees her as her mother’s daughter, her mother who prattles incessantly about the delights of marrying £10,000 a year.

When Elizabeth persists in her asseveration that she truly loves Mr. Darcy he breaks into an exhortation that ends with the poignant words “Let me not have the grief of seeing you unable to respect your partner in life. You know not what you are about.”

His relationship with Mrs. Bennet, which has been a lively source of comedy throughout the book, appears in a different light. We feel the tragedy behind it.

With perfect artistry, after this moment of truth in the life of Mr. and Mrs. Bennet, Jane Austen concludes the chapter by whisking us back to Mrs. Bennet as a character of comedy, and describing her reaction to Elizabeth’s engagement.

Mrs. Bennet had been no less disposed to dislike Mr. Darcy than her husband had been, she had that very morning exclaimed on seeing him walk up to the house “Good gracious, if that disagreeable Mr. Darcy is not coming here again with our dear Bingley! What can he mean by being so tiresome as to be always coming here Lizzy you must walk out with him again that he may not be in Bingley’s way.”

But on the evening of the same day, when Elizabeth announces her engagement, Mr. Darcy is anything but disagreeable to his future mother-in-law.

On first hearing it, Mrs. Bennet sat quite still, and

unable to utter a syllable. Nor was it under many more minutes that she could comprehend what she heard, though not in general backward to credit what was for the advantage of her family, or that came in the shape of a lover to any of them. She began at length to recover, to fidget about in her chair, get up, sit down again, wonder and bless herself.

‘Good gracious ! Lord bless me ! only think ! dear me ! Mr. Darcy ! Who would have thought it ? And is it really true ? Oh, my sweetest Lizzy ! how rich and great you will be ! What pin-money, what jewels, what carriages you will have ! Jane is nothing to it—nothing at all. I am so pleased—so happy ! Such a charming man !—so handsome ! so tall !—Oh, my dear Lizzy ! Pray apologise for my having disliked him so much before. I hope he will overlook it. Dear, dear Lizzy ! A house in town ! Everything that is charming ! Three daughters married ! Ten thousand a year ! Oh, Lord ! what will become of me ? I shall go distracted.’

One of the chief delights of reading Jane Austen is pleasure in her faultless craftsmanship. How skilfully constructed is this chapter which begins and ends with the high comedy of Mrs. Bennet, but contains as its kernel and central incident the serious interview between her husband and her daughter.

Moreover, by the finest of ironic touches, Jane Austen indicates that Elizabeth is not only superior to her poor mother in intellect, but stronger than her father in character. Mr. Bennet, with a typical touch of sarcastic humour, says of Darcy’s request for Elizabeth’s hand : “I have given him my consent. He is the kind of man, indeed, to whom I should never dare refuse anything which he condescended to ask.” It is not lost on the reader that Elizabeth had dared to refuse Mr. Darcy when he first condescended to ask her. We have the double pleasure of smiling *with* and *at* Mr. Bennet.

Mrs. Bennet is not the only character in the novels whose mind runs rather often on the subject of incomes, especially those of marriageable young men and women. The study of incomes and their sources is to-day a reputable part of historical enquiry, and we are asked to believe (with some probability) in the disillusioning theory that the great national and international cataclysms, that used to be put down to the beliefs and aspirations of our forefathers, were in reality the outcome of sordid material competition. When social and economic history is being discussed Jane Austen is sometimes cited as a novelist with a keen eye for the material sub-structure of society. The other day I was re-reading that witty and dexterous early poem of W. H. Auden, “A Letter to Lord Byron.” At the beginning he tells Byron that he had thought of

addressing another immortal shade, Jane Austen, and he goes on to wonder whether Jane Austen, in the other world, would regard Byron as shocking :

You could not shock her more than she shocks me.
Beside her Joyce seems innocent as grass.
It makes me most uncomfortable to see
An English spinster of the middle class
Describe the amorous effects of 'brass,'
Reveal so frankly and with such sobriety
The economic basis of society.

The poem does not as a whole "date" but that verse belongs unmistakably to the uneasy 1930's when nobody could be natural about money.

Jane Austen is perfectly natural about it. "It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife" This is one of the most famous opening sentences in literature; an elegant ironic little joke, not intended as a comment on social history, still less as a criticism of the amiable people of Merryton to whom she is about to introduce us.

It is true that all Jane Austen's heroines marry well in the material sense. But to suggest that this was the chief consideration, or even a major consideration in Jane Austen's mind is absurd. It is Mrs. Bennet not the author who is in ecstasy at her daughters' wealth. To be relieved of material anxiety, to be able to cut some figure in the world, may not be the noblest form of human happiness, but it is a substantial contributory cause to those higher forms of happiness which Jane Austen considered desirable. It would be foolish to deny it. At the close of *Persuasion* she gently mocks those 18th century idealists, usually quite well off themselves, who condemned riches as a source of woe. She is describing the happier circumstances of Anne's poor friend Mrs. Smith.

'Mrs. Smith's' enjoyments were not spoiled by this improvement of income with some improvement of health . . . for her cheerfulness and mental alacrity did not fail her; and while these prime supplies of good remained, she might have bid defiance even to greater accessions of worldly prosperity. She might have been absolutely rich and perfectly healthy and yet be happy."

It is perverse to be critical of an author who has the forethought to provide well for her characters and who is unself-conscious about doing so.

Acceptance of the economic facts of society is one thing. Undue preoccupation with money is quite another. Jane Austen always regards this with disapproval ranging from light mockery at the mere silliness of a Mrs. Bennet or a Mrs. Elton, to a sharper irony at the meanness of Mrs. Norris, and rising to indig-

nation at the monstrous behaviour of General Tilney to Catherine Morland when he finds out that she is not an heiress. Perhaps the most telling exposure of all occurs in that famous dialogue between Mr. and Mrs. John Dashwood at the beginning of **Sense and Sensibility**, in which the wife persuades the husband that the promise made to his dying father to look after his three half-sisters can really have had nothing to do with money at all: "The assistance he thought of, I daresay, was only such as might reasonably be expected of you. For instance, such as looking out for a comfortable small house for them, helping them to move their things, and sending them presents of fish and game, and so forth, whenever they are in season."

No character worthy of respect is ever affected by money in a matter of the heart. In this sense Jane Austen is essentially moral and at times even romantic. Whatever Mrs. Bennet may say about Mr. Bingley's fortune, neither Jane nor Elizabeth has a mercenary thought. Among her heroines only Marianne Dashwood and Catherine Morland are given to excessive romanticism, but not one of them thinks of marrying for anything but love.

Anne Elliot is condemned to live for seven years in a polite suburb of Hell because she made the mistake of listening to worldly advice and turning her back on love. She can be forgiven; she can be brought back to happiness in the end because the reasons for the mistake were not her own. She had acted out of respect for the advice of Lady Russell, her mother's friend, and not of her own will. But not for one moment does Jane Austen condone the misjudgement.

But now a word about the heroines with romantic ideas. First Catherine Morland. **Northanger Abbey** is high comedy, at times perilously near to farce. The Thorpes are excellent fun but they are not serious characters; they are entertaining caricatures. Mrs. Allen is little more than a witty sketch. Catherine herself is fully and convincingly realised, though at the beginning when Jane Austen uses her to make a mock of the romantic literary fashion, she takes away something from this realism. At the beginning of the book Catherine is presented as an average quite ordinary adolescent girl, a sort of anti-heroine in opposition to the romantic convention. But by the time she reaches Northanger Abbey we understand and sympathize with her perfectly as a real human being. She is no longer merely an object lesson on the foolishness of romantic young ladies. She is someone whose fears and speculations and disillusiones we willingly share. I never fail to be mortified when the document in the mysteriously locked cabinet turns out to be a laundry bill. Nor is it to be forgotten that this intentionally anti-romantic novel ends with the triumph of romantic love.

Last year Mr. L. P. Hartley spoke movingly of Marianne Dashwood, the most truly romantic heroine, who only just evades

a tragic end. There is the stuff of real tragedy in the love of this trusting impulsive girl for the irresponsible Willoughby. There are also moving undertones in her relationship with her sister Elinor—Marianne visibly suffering the pangs of heartbreak while Elinor stoically conceals her own distress. But I will not attempt to add anything to what Mr. Hartley so illuminatingly said last year.

The other four novels—**Pride and Prejudice**, **Emma**, **Mansfield Park** and **Persuasion**—contain studies of deep emotion remarkable for their power and their reticence, or perhaps the power of their reticence. The undertones of tragedy are audible through the comedy: faintly perhaps in the comedy atmosphere that pervades **Pride and Prejudice** and **Emma**, more strongly in **Mansfield Park**, strongest of all in **Persuasion**.

In all four novels we are constantly aware of Jane Austen's respect and understanding for true feeling, for sincerity in human relationships. She can be indulgent to shallow feelings when they are allied with sweetness of nature and steadiness of moral outlook, as for instance in Harriet Smith or Lady Bertram. But she relentlessly exposes the shallow characters who are also selfish, like Lydia Bennet, or pretentious and taken up with false values like Mrs. Elton or Mrs. Norris.

She reserves her fullest admiration for the steadfast, the constant, the spirits capable of deep and lasting love and she devotes to them her greatest gifts of characterisation. Fanny Price is perhaps the least entertaining of her heroines though I sometimes think that hers is the most masterly portrait of all, because it is so exceptionally difficult to give reality to a quiet and passive character. The tone is set for Fanny on her arrival at Mansfield Park, when, in tears, she knows she ought to be happy (because Mrs. Norris has told her so) but she cannot be happy because her loyal and tender heart is in the home she has left. Conflict of feeling is the recurrent theme in her life and her quiet strength is shown by her ability to take the right decision however painful. Thus, in spite of the annoyance of her cousins, she refuses to take part in the dramatic performance of "Lovers' Vows" and, in a passage of great intensity, she resists the pressure put on her by Sir Thomas Bertram to accept Henry Crawford's offer of marriage. Accused of stubbornness and ingratitude, she is cut to the heart, but she will not move from her decision.

In **Persuasion** the subtle unfolding of the situation between Anne Elliot and Frederick Wentworth is worked out through heightening moments of anxiety and doubt with superb literary craftsmanship. There are few more moving or more intensely realised moments in English literature than that in which Captain Wentworth, in a crowded room, overhears Anne discussing with Captain Harville the comparative constancy of men and women in love, and is moved by what he hears into writing to her to declare his love. Under the surface calm of this scene the

controlled passion of the two protagonists seems to electrify the atmosphere, so that the absurd intrusion of Charles Musgrove is a welcome relief of tension.

In **Pride and Prejudice** the smooth surface of comedy is not at first disturbed by the intrusion of any strong emotion. The evolution of Mr. Darcy takes some time. Up to the point of his first proposal of marriage to Elizabeth we remain at a distance from him. To be sure there are some indications—in his attitude to the tiresome Miss Bingley for instance—that he has depth and judgement. But he appears on the whole as a haughty and apparently heartless man who interferes between Bingley and Jane and is said to have treated Wickham badly. Only after his rebuff by Elizabeth do we become aware of his finer qualities and of the strength and depth of his feelings. These are manifested in his generous intervention over Lydia's elopement and his restoring of Bingley to Jane. The springs of an inherently fine nature have been touched by the depth of his passion and his desire to win the approbation of the woman he loves. His silence is now no longer the silence of a disobliging haughtiness, but the silence of a proud, shy man wrestling with a tumult of new feelings.

It is useless to describe things which Jane Austen has described so much better; it is a pleasure merely to recall them. I must conclude with my own favourite, **Emma**. The relationship of Mr. Knightley and Emma is essentially suited to comedy. Mr. Knightley has been in love with Emma for at least seven years when the novel starts. He was probably in love with her when he carried off that reading list that Emma had made for herself at the age of 14. "I remember thinking it did her judgment so much credit that I preserved it for some time" he says. Having let slip this admission he goes on at once to criticize Emma. "But I have done with expecting any course of steady reading from Emma. She will never submit to anything requiring industry and patience, and a subjection of the fancy to the understanding."

Being in love with Emma, Mr. Knightley always wants to talk about her but because he is 17 years older the concealment of his attachment has become second nature, so that when he talks about her (and usually when he talks *to* her) he can only criticize. This is a beautifully observed comedy of human relations which turns to something more serious at the critical moment when Emma is rude to Miss Bates on Box Hill. Truly we should feel more for Mr. Knightley than Miss Bates on this occasion. Of course Miss Bates is sadly wounded but she has great recuperative powers and her innocence and simplicity make it relatively easy for Emma to put things right by future politeness. But Mr. Knightley is deeply stricken because he cannot endure to see Emma, whom he so deeply loves, behave in a way so unworthy of herself and of his idea of her. Emma's reaction to his reproof indicates for the first time to the reader (though not yet to Emma herself) that her

feelings for Mr. Knightley and her desire for his approval go much deeper than mere friendship. Emma remains only dimly aware of her own feelings until they burst on her with a rush when Harriet Smith announces her love for Mr. Knightley and her belief that it is returned. The scene between Emma and Harriet is tragi-comedy of the best, but the misunderstanding between Emma and Mr. Knightley on the famous walk in the shrubbery has deeper undertones. He is trying to console her for the deception he believes her to have suffered about Frank Churchill, while she is convinced that he is about to confide to her his love for Harriet. This is comedy for the reader who knows the true situation. But it is passionate earnest for Mr. Knightley who, after long years of waiting, feels that his happiness now depends wholly on Emma; and it is acutely painful for Emma who believes that she has lost him at the very moment of realising her love for him. Their conversation is a complex pattern of misunderstanding, in which we follow with almost painful sympathy the fears and hopes of each until the moment of clarification.

“My dearest Emma” said he, “for dearest you will always be, whatever the event of this hour’s conversation, my dearest, most beloved Emma, tell me at once. Say ‘No’ if it is to be said”

“While he spoke Emma’s mind was most busy and with all the wonderful velocity of thought had been able, and yet without losing a word, to catch and comprehend the exact truth of the whole; to see that Harriet’s hopes had been entirely groundless, a mistake, a delusion as complete a delusion as any of her own—that Harriet was nothing; that she was everything herself and not only was there time for these convictions, with all their glow of attendant happiness, there was time also to rejoice that Harriet’s secret had not escaped her, and to resolve that it need not and should not. It was all the service she could now render her poor friend; for as to any of that heroism of sentiment which might have prompted her to entreat him to transfer his affection from herself to Harriet, as infinitely the most worthy of the two—or even the more simple sublimity of resolving to refuse him at once and for ever, without vouchsafing any motive, because he could not marry them both, Emma had it not.”

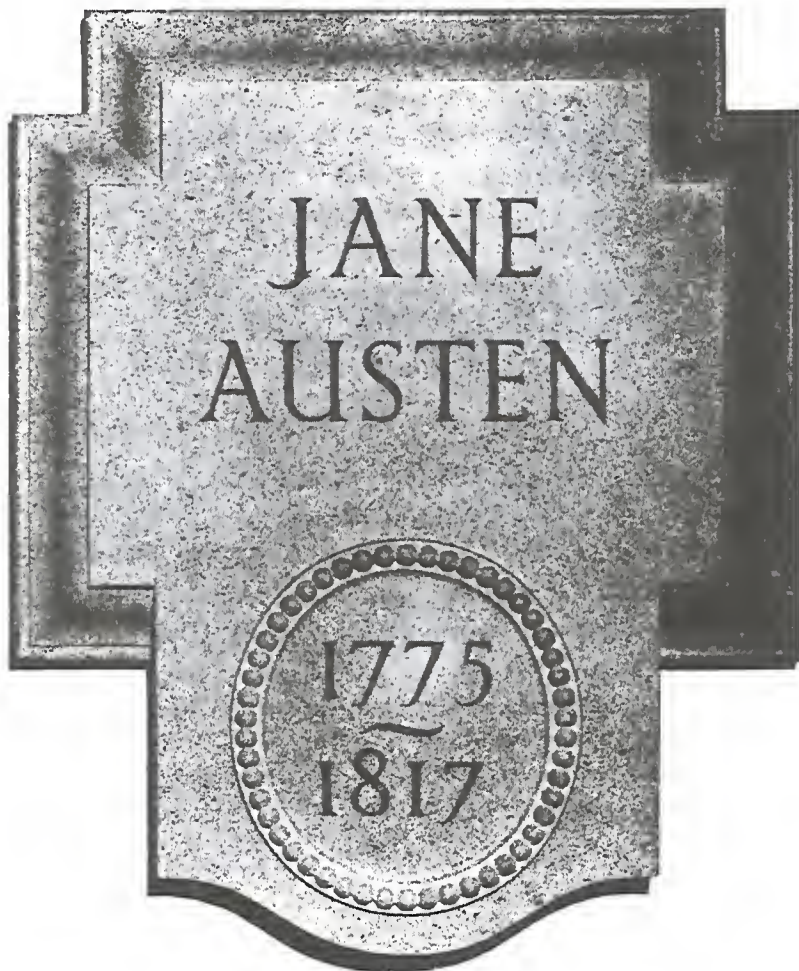
And so misunderstanding and pain are exquisitely dissolved into sanity and comedy. Once again Jane Austen makes us perceive that tears and laughter are very close together. How does she do it, passing from mood to mood, illuminating them all with such simplicity and economy of language? One element in her genius is the recognition of the tragic forces in life, which she rarely allows to prevail, and never in the case of her heroes and

heroines, but which she knows to be there. Knowledge of tragedy gives strength and reality to all her studies of the human comedy.

C. V. Wedgwood.

THE JANE AUSTEN SOCIETY

Report for the Year 1967



THE JANE AUSTEN SOCIETY

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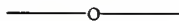
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THE JANE AUSTEN SOCIETY

Report for the year 1967



Membership

One hundred and fifty two new members joined during the year. Of those, eighteen are from the U.S.A., and one each from Australia, Canada, Hong Kong and Japan. Thirty-two of the new members became Life Members, as did seven old members.

Members are reminded that subscriptions are due on 1st January, and that this Report is the only reminder that they will receive. The Hon. Secretary would much appreciate prompt payment of the 5/- Annual Subscription, and will gladly provide a Banker's Order Form.

Annual General Meeting

The Annual Meeting was held at Chawton House, on Saturday, 15th July, by permission of Major and Mrs. Edward Knight, when about 480 members and their friends were present. Lord David Cecil presided.

The President congratulated the Jane Austen Commemoration Committee on the organisation of their programme, with a special mention of Mrs. Edward Knight, the Chairman, and Mrs. E. A. Mallinson, the Hon. Secretary.

He asked that the minutes of the last Annual General Meeting, which had been published in the Annual Report, should be taken as read.

The Hon. Secretary presented the Report for 1966. This was seconded by Mr. W. O. P. Rosedale, and carried.

The Hon. Treasurer presented the accounts for 1966. Their adoption was proposed by Mr. N. G. Williams, seconded by Mrs. Lucas, and carried.

Sir William Makins proposed that Lord David Cecil be re-elected President, and that the Duke of Wellington, Mr. T. Edward Carpenter and Mr. John Gore be re-elected Vice-Presidents. This was seconded by Mrs. Freeman, and carried.

It was proposed by the President, and carried, that Sir William Makins be re-elected Chairman, and that the Committee be re-elected en bloc.

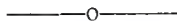
The meeting was addressed by Mr. John O. Bayley, Fellow and Tutor of New College, Oxford, who spoke on "Emma, and her Critics."

A vote of thanks was proposed by Dr. Andrew H. Wright, of the University of California, seconded by Sir John Russell, and carried.

The President closed the meeting by thanking Major and Mrs. Knight for lending Chawton House for the meeting. Tea tickets raised approximately £75 in aid of Chawton Church Funds.

Annual General Meeting, 1968

The Annual General Meeting will be held, at Chawton House, by kind permission of Major and Mrs. Edward Knight, on Saturday, 20th July, at 3 p.m. The meeting will be addressed by Mr. Brian Southam, editor of **Volume the Second**, 1963, and whose other publications on Jane Austen include a re-edition of Dr. R. W. Chapman's **Minor Works**, 1954, and **Jane Austen : The Critical Heritage**, 1968. Mr. Southam will speak on "Jane Austen and her Audience."



Winchester and Westminster

Two events during the year which marked the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of Jane Austen's death should be recorded.

On Tuesday, 18th July, the date of Jane Austen's death, at the close of Evensong in Winchester Cathedral, conducted by Canon W. D. Maundrell, at which the Dean of Winchester (the Very Revd. O. H. Gibbs-Smith) was present, the Duke of Wellington laid a wreath on Jane Austen's tomb. The card bore the following words.

"In remembrance, the Jane Austen Society laid
this wreath on the marble slab which marks the
grave of

JANE AUSTEN (1775-1817)

who died in College Street, under the shadow of
Winchester Cathedral 150 years ago this day
July 18th, 1967."

On Sunday, 17th December, by invitation of the Dean of Westminster (the Very Revd. E. S. Abbott), members of the Society were present at Evensong in Westminster Abbey, when the preacher was Canon M. S. Stancliffe, Rector of St. Margaret, Westminster. At the end of the service Lord David Cecil unveiled and the Dean of Westminster dedicated a memorial tablet to Jane Austen, in Poets' Corner. The tablet, in Roman Stone, had been



designed by Mr. S. E. Dykes Bower, Surveyor of the Fabric, and is illustrated on the cover of this report. The idea of placing a memorial in Westminster Abbey came from Miss P. K. M. Sweeting, a member of the Society. At both of these services Prayer written by Jane Austen (Minor Works, edited by R. W. Chapman, No. II, page 454) was read.

Commemorating Jane Austen's Death

by Richard Knight

July, 1967, was a month to remember for all Jane Austen's admirers. If they could not be at Chawton in person to commemorate the 150th anniversary of her death, they certainly heard or read about it. Well over fifteen hundred people came to Chawton for those five days of Indian summer, and the organising committee, who took some risk in guaranteeing funds for the original scheme, were able to distribute a small profit to local charities.

A major vote of thanks was due to Mrs. Anne Mallinson, the organising secretary, and to Major and Mrs. Edward Knight, who acted as hosts at Chawton House for the Commemoration.

My task was to see that the event received proper coverage in the newspapers and on radio and television. I was amazed at the willingness with which they took up the cause. It was a fair indication of the regard in which the nation today holds Jane Austen.

I found particularly striking an article by John Grigg in the Guardian published the day before the commemoration was opened by Mr. Edward Heath.

Mr. Heath began by recalling that the Austens were an old Kentish family, and went on: "As a man of Kent I am happy to make this pilgrimage from the Garden of Eden to the Shrine at Chawton."

He could not quite fathom why he, a politician, had been asked to perform the opening, for "politics was not for Miss Austen." But maybe it was as one qualified to acknowledge the debt that generations of bachelors owed to her. "You will readily understand that I do not accept the opening words of **Pride and Prejudice** where Miss Austen writes: 'It is a truth universally acknowledged that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in need of a wife.' She might also have written that a single man in need of a wife must be in possession of a good fortune."

He continued: "Yet none of this diminishes my admiration for Jane Austen or the fascination that her works continue to hold for many. The wit of a fine and penetrating mind, the gentle irony of one whose undoubted affection for her subjects could never blind her to their follies and weaknesses; the impressive, dramatic progress of her novels which marks the work of a literary craftsman; the lucid and flowing prose which establishes her as a great creative artist. It is these qualities which make her timeless; this is what makes us proud and happy to commemorate her memory."

Simultaneously the exhibitions of "Chawton Past and Present" and of paintings of the village and surrounding countryside executed by local artists opened at Chawton House. At the Village Hall a selection of paintings by children, some on the Jane Austen theme, was shown. Later, prizes for this exhibition were presented by Miss Beatrix Darnell, co-founder, with her late sister, of the Jane Austen Society.

Two exhibits in the exhibition at Chawton House attracted particular attention. One was Miss Austen's christening gown loaned by Mrs. Starling, widow of B. J. Starling, who died in Winchester in 1964. The other was the little silhouette by C. Wellings, dated 1783, of Jane's brother Edward being introduced to Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Knight—a meeting of great significance for Chawton and for Miss Austen.

On Friday evening, too, Miss Isobel Baillie gave a recital in Chawton church which was packed to hear her selections from Bach, Balbastre, Purcell, Haydn, Schubert, Stanley and Handel. The Saturday was the Jane Austen Society Annual Meeting as usual, with attendance swelled on this special occasion. Lord David Cecil, the President, had the pleasure of introducing one of his former pupils as guest speaker, Mr. John Bayley, now a Fellow and Tutor of New College, Oxford.

There was also the first of several showings of an exceptional film on Chawton made by Mrs. Mallinson, Mr. Christopher Sharples and Mr. Henry Aubrey-Fletcher.

In the evening the great marquee was filled for two separate stage performances of extracts from Jane Austen's books devised by Betty Pinchard and admirably acted by her and her Bromley Little Theatre Players.

Sunday almost exceeded in "Englishness" the other days. The Archdeacon of Basingstoke preached at morning service in Chawton Church and after lunch, in the steaming heat, there was cricket in the costume of 1800—and what a game! Chawton's opponents, the Gloucester Gypsies, scraped home with five minutes to spare.

Miss Elizabeth Jenkins, a great authority on Jane Austen, gave a talk in the evening. To me she revealed all sorts of new

things—that Jane's household chore was looking after the tea, sugar and wine; that in London, visiting her brother Henry, she had a thoroughly gay time; that she died of Addison's disease; and that the door in Chawton Cottage now labelled "the creaking door" may not in fact have been the one that warned Jane of approaching visitors.

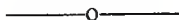
For those who could stay, the Commemoration continued on Monday and Tuesday. Monday was "the day of the long walk." Forty stalwarts set out on a trudge round the parish boundary for the traditional "beating of the bounds" ceremony. This was followed by another staged performance—"One Hundred and Fifty Years of Variety"—acted by members of local drama societies and other talented individuals.

On Tuesday a coach party left the Grey Friar at Chawton with Mr. Anthony Rye at its head to visit Steventon ("Steenton" Jane may have pronounced it, as Mr. Rye pointed out), Deane, Ashe and Manydown, places closely connected with the novelist's life. Mr. Rye, who must have put in hours of preparation, ably assisted the imaginations of his guests in recreating the life and time of Miss Austen and the places she knew, some of them sadly demolished. The tour ended at Winchester with a service in the Cathedral when wreaths of remembrance were laid on her tomb. Chawton also gained a tree. It was a small pink chestnut planted, to commemorate the 150th anniversary of her death, on the roadside opposite Jane Austen's cottage. It was dedicated by the Parish Council.

Not quite the end, for tradition has it that celebrations in Chawton finish with a bonfire. The scene was set in Mr. and Mrs. Charles Bond's meadow at the Dower House. Unfortunately it rained but the bonfire somehow blazed and the party went on with true British determination.



This commemorative frank, which was approved by the Post Office, and is reproduced by their permission, was used on all letters, which numbered 9087, posted at Chawton Post Office on 18th July.



From "My Life and Times," Octave 6, by Compton Mackenzie

"The novels of Jane Austen have been compared to several small and beautiful things, but never so far as I know to the reflections of life in one of those round slightly convex Dutch mirrors of her own date. That is how I see them : as a diminished and detached, a tranquil and crystalline life, where concentration lends an extra vividness to the colour of the fabric, an added lustre to the simplest ornament, and where the curve of the glass touches with playful caricature the movement of humanity within. If I find myself in a room with such a mirror the luminous spectacle of the light therein reflected is to me more exciting than the light it reflects."

Sir Compton Mackenzie, who has given permission for this extract to be reproduced, adds to this lapidary paragraph a sentence which must elicit a responsive assent from all Miss Austen's admirers (except for the epithet "ill-composed") :

"It is no paradox to claim that of all Miss Austen's exciting books **Emma** is the most exciting. I must have read it at least a dozen times, but it has taken me three days to make the few ill-composed observations, because I kept putting down my pen to turn over and over again the enchanting pages."



(Photo.: Alton Gazette)

Jane Austen's Christening Robe

The Christening Robe illustrated here was on view at Chawton House during the Commemoration in July. It passed by descent in the following manner, so it is reasonable to assume that it was worn by Jane Austen at her Baptism.

George Austen m. Cassandra Leigh

Edward (Austen) Knight m. Elizabeth Bridges

Elizabeth Knight m. Edward Boyd Rice

Florence Mary Rice m. John Osmaston

Rosamund Osmaston m. Rev. William Starling

Bertram John Starling m. Edith Daisy Wheeler

The robe was lent to the exhibition by Mrs. B. J. Starling, and is reproduced here by her permission.

A Jane Austen document from Somerset House

In 1817 when Jane Austen died, the only form of duty on the estates of deceased persons was a Legacy duty imposed by an Act of 1796 and administered at the Stamp Office, Somerset House (an ancestor of the present Board of Inland Revenue).

Through the initiative of Mrs. Mallinson and the help of Mr. F. W. Moss (a retired Inspector of Taxes), Mr. J. M. Stevenson of the I.R. Dept has very kindly presented to the Society a photocopy of the relevant document used in Jane Austen's case. It will be offered to the Chawton Museum for display—the original will be transferred to the Public Record Office.

The four-sided document is too large and much of the print too small for publication in full in this Report, but the Registration and Declaration portions are here reproduced and the remainder briefly summarised. It will be remembered that Jane in her will left specific legacies amounting to £100 and appointed her sister Cassandra as residuary legatee and executrix. The Declaration by Cassandra was made at Canterbury on 10th November, 1817, which suggests that she was then staying at Godmersham.

At the time of Jane's death, cash in the house and at the bank amounted to £70, the proceeds of sale of £200 5% Bank Annuities produced £211 and debts of £93.15.0. were owing to her—from this total, probate expenses (£22.1.0.), funeral expenses (£92), the £100 of legacies, and debts which Jane owed (£25) were discharged; and the residue which fell to Cassandra amounted to £561.2.0., made up of Cash and £400 5% Bank Annuities. On this total, Cassandra paid duty, @ 3%, of £16.16.8.

J.G.

A Photographic Link with Jane Austen



Thomas Lefroy
An. Oct 93.
without Specs

Thomas Langlois Lefroy (1776-1869) was a well-known Irish barrister who became Lord Chief Justice of the Queen's Bench, of Ireland, and died in his 93rd year having held that office till his 90th year. Most of his life was spent in Ireland but he entered Lincoln's Inn in 1793 and on a visit to the Lefroys of Ashe in 1796 became acquainted with Jane Austen, who in January, 1796 was twenty years old, he being a year younger.

The Rev. Isaac Peter Lefroy, Rector of Ashe, was his uncle, and Mrs. Lefroy, his aunt by marriage, had already a most

affectionate friendship with Jane Austen, though the latter was twenty-six years her junior. Mrs. Lefroy was killed in a carriage accident in 1804, and a poem written by Jane Austen on the anniversary of this death shows how acutely she felt the loss.

The acquaintance of herself and Thomas Lefroy was resumed later in the same year. In 1797 Lefroy was called to the Irish bar and began to practise in Dublin. Lefroy is one of two or three men whose names have been linked romantically but tenuously with Jane Austen's. She writes to her sister Cassandra on Thursday, 14th January, 1796, of a ball in prospect at Ashe Rectory on the following evening, at which Tom Lefroy was to be present before his departure for Ireland. On the Friday she continues the letter: "At length the day is come on which I am to flirt my last with Tom Lefroy."

In 1799 he married Mary Paul, the sister of a college friend, who inherited a Wexford property when her brother died, and he was the father of 4 sons and 3 daughters. He survived Jane Austen by 52 years, and as an old man, he once spoke of having been in love with her, saying:- "but it was a boy's love."

Some notes by Mr. Daniel Gillman of Dublin recently sent to the Jane Austen Society on the Lefroy family in Ireland and the houses in which they lived in Limerick and elsewhere supply a rather startling link with the past with a *photograph* of Lefroy signed by him and taken in the last year of his life—a rare instance of a photograph of one who knew young Jane Austen well.

Photography by 1869 had made great advances beyond the early efforts of Daguerre and his successors—it was about the time when Mrs. Cameron took a hand in the art and this photograph of a stern and baldheaded old man, with a formidable jaw, without spectacles and in a frock coat, is at least as 'modern' as some of her studies of Victorian worthies now displayed in Brokenhurst station. It is worthy of reproduction in the Annual Report

Mr. Gillman's notes contain other matters of interest to the Society, for his brief record of Lefroy's career goes into more detail than does the notice of him in the D.N.B. We are glad to have it. Mr. Gillman's prime object in writing the notes was to record the history of the houses lived in by the Irish Lefroys, a family of Huguenot origin long settled in southern England, in particular No. 108 O'Connell Street, Limerick, a Georgian town-house (now to be demolished) built in 1792 and occupied by Col. Anthony Lefroy (9th Dragoons), where he brought up his large family of whom Thomas was the eldest son. Other houses in which the Lord Chief Justice lived were Carriglas Manor, Co. Longford, and New Court, Bray, Co. Wicklow, where he died. (But these matters are of course only of oblique relevance to the Jane Austen Society).

John Gore

Emma and her Critics

Address given at the Annual General Meeting by Mr. John Bayley

None of us here today would deny that the pleasures and perceptions Jane Austen offers her readers can be of a very complex kind. Each re-reading strikes us afresh with something newly significant, and some change in the perspective of our own world in relation to hers. The shock of this renewed relationship has stimulated most of the good things that have been written about her, even the unfavourable good things, like Professor Garrod's **Jane Austen : A Depreciation**. She bothered Professor Garrod : she got under his skin : in re-reading her he discovered something about his own outlook on life that made it urgently necessary to depreciate hers. And this is typical. Our reaction to her seems intimately, bound up with our own experience, and the progress of our own lives.

This may seem Janeite nonsense, mere inability to separate ourselves from art which has become assimilated into the vocabulary of our own consciousness. But the point is that this is not the kind of assimilation to which some works of art are subject by their exclusive and excluding admirers, but a real questioning or wondering, an apparent dialogue between our own intelligence and another's. We never quite know where we are with Jane Austen, as we know where we are with George Eliot, and even with Henry James. *He* may sometimes not have been quite sure what he thought about things, but then we can see him being not quite sure—Jane Austen's certainties are much more enigmatic. And might he not, on this kind of ground, question the assumption of Dr. Leavis, that a "Great Tradition" unites her unmistakably with the high intelligences who dominate the later 19th century novel. For the idea of that tradition takes for granted, above all, a complete and confident knowledge of the minds of the authors who represent it. George Eliot, Henry James, Conrad and D. H. Lawrence—we can know them fully as literary personalities, and this knowledge is not directly dependent on the quantity of our biographical information about them. We can *consider* them, even as they consider their material. But our relation with Jane Austen is not like this. In one way we know her too well to be so coherently aware of her; and in another way we do not know her at all.

This dilemma is reflected in the best of the critical writing about her. It was Macaulay, I believe, who first associated her with Shakespeare; and the best things about her do indeed treat her novels with the same freedom with which criticism had treated Shakespeare's plays, finding in them what gives critical perception its chance to be free, bold, and speculative.

"I do not write for such dull elves
As have not a great deal of ingenuity themselves."

Her own facetious parody of *Marmion*, in a letter to her sister, has certainly been taken *au pied de la lettre* by her liveliest critics, who have exhibited a great deal of their own critical ingenuity. And their own sense of her up-to-dateness. A Polish savant, Professor Jan Kott, has recently written a study called "Shakespeare : Our Contemporary." "Jane Austen : Our Contemporary" would describe equally well the tone of recent discussion about her, a tone perhaps first heard in the title of D. W. Harding's essay—"Regulated Hatred : An Aspect of the Work of Jane Austen." Criticism can see her now as satisfying even our literary appetite for the stronger emotions.

It was not always so. She was once enjoyed—even by her greatest admirers—as almost a period piece, a sunlit refuge from the cares of the reader. But though even the Shakespearean scholar C. A. Bradley called her "exceptionally peaceful reading," Reginald Farrer was remarking about the same time that *Emma* produced at each reading more possibilities to ponder on; and that it was far from being—in the phrase Dostoevsky used to describe *Anna Karenina*—an "innocent" book. Edmund Wilson has since opined that much of its theme lies below the level of overt treatment—a line of argument to which the talk about *Hamlet* has accustomed us. Professor Trilling, who has written two of the most interesting essays of recent years about Jane Austen, has been as valuably speculative, perceiving in *Mansfield Park* something akin to his own preoccupations with the nature and style of a contemporary morality; and, in *Emma*, a sustained imaginative inquiry into how a society ideally works through its members; how it gains and keeps its virtues.

The Shakespeare parallel reveals in these cases a paradox which has a certain irony. For the more the modern critics write about Jane Austen as if she were Shakespeare, the more they tend to find in her novels what they find in George Eliot's, in Proust's, in Henry James's. The fact is that the more the novel comes to commit itself unreservedly to the intellect, the less we can feel ourselves in a familiar relation to those who profess and practise its art. It is the penalty of the intellect that in holding forth, with whatever degree of sincerity and subtlety, it relinquishes that peculiarly immediate and yet equivocal attitude towards its experience that challenges and fascinates us in Jane Austen. With George Eliot, as I have said, we know exactly where we are—she leaves us in no doubt about herself and her convictions. She knows what she thinks, and she lets us know, for everything—or almost everything—that she creates has been raised to the level of cogitation and exposition.

I say "almost everything," because it is notorious that in

George Eliot's novels there is some material, and particularly certain characters, who seem to be left outside her penetrating, often humorous examinations—those figures and situations “deeply studied and elaborately justified,” in Henry James's phrase—which are her fine achievement. In the same context James goes on to say that her characters, however “deeply studied and elaborately justified,” are “not *seen* in the irresponsible plastic way,” and here he reveals the great division which seems to me more important than the “great tradition.” Jane Austen, with Shakespeare and Tolstoy, are on one side of it : George Eliot, and James himself, on the other.

It is perfectly true, of course, that Jane Austen herself in her earlier novels delights in a certain sort of definition. Mrs. Bennet “was a woman of mean understanding, little information, and uncertain temper.” Yet there is an immense difference between definition of this sort and the Olympian analysis of and commentary on society implied by the passage quoted above. Indeed definition in early Jane Austen is surely almost a humorous abdication of the majesty of justice—its exasperation asks not for any measured agreement from us but for our sympathy as fellow-sufferers and members of the same family.

In these comments on Mr. Woodhouse by a recent critic we seem far away from this aspect of Jane Austen :

“Mr. Woodhouse—after long years of invalidism, of being coddled by his daughter, of scarcely stirring from his house or seeing a new person—is an idiot. He is quite incapable of thought or judgement. When Emma, in a rare mood of almost irritable playfulness, tries to point out the contradiction between his respect for brides and his dislike of marriage, she only makes him nervous without making him at all understand. His tenacious clinging to Emma, to his acquaintances, to the seen boundaries of his world, comes to resemble the clinging of a parasitic plant, which must be now or sometime shaken off. Mr. Woodhouse is the living—barely living—excuse for Emma's refusal to commit herself to the human world.”*

I confess to total puzzlement, which I feel Jane Austen might have shared, about the meaning of the word “human” in this context. It is surely a wholly different fictional outlook which finds some human beings more human than others? And though the critic is entitled to his own assessment of Mr. Woodhouse, is it fair to assume his creator felt the same way? Doesn't he ignore Jane Austen's characteristic and “irresponsible” sharing of Mr. Woodhouse with us? Jane Austen, and we with her, enter into Mr. Woodhouse as Shakespeare enters into Falstaff and Shylock, or Tolstoy into Stiva Oblonsky; and it is moving, liberating, and illuminating to be enabled to feel in this way how

*Jane Austen, *Irony as Defence and Discovery*, by Marvin Mudrick, p. 196.

other people feel; to relax inside their limitations; to acquiesce briefly in the bonds of their temperament; to surrender for the moment our own modes of judging, perceiving, and desiring. This is a primal experience in literature, and one essentially different in kind from our being invited to contemplate the character as a portrait, and to assist in the analysis of its composition. Of course with Jane Austen we can do that too, but a kind of identification comes first, and profoundly modifies our ensuing appraisal. It is from his critical vantage-point outside that Professor Mudrick calls Mr. Woodhouse an "idiot." Jane Austen in life might herself have called him that in a moment of exasperation, and so can her reader; but it would be an exclamation from inside a community, not a verdict from outside it.

It is a vital premise of *Emma*, as a novel, that we have to live inside such a community, as Jane Austen enables us to live inside the individuals who compose it, and so we have to take the consequences of such an exclamation about one of its members, as Emma herself does after her unkindness to Miss Bates. The remarkable force of that event, and the directness of its impact upon us, proceeds from its summation of the whole tendency of the novel—its enveloping intimacy. No question but that both author and reader share in Emma's guilt. Jane Austen's art puts us and herself into a community from which there is no withdrawing; and in which we are entitled to malice, to misunderstanding, to levity, to thoughtlessness: to anything except the right to detach ourselves and contemplate with our author from outside. The seeing and creating irresponsibility of the "plastic" artist is an aspect of this total involvement: to Jane Austen, and hence to us,—it is what "that very dear part of Emma, her fancy"—was to Emma.

In using against Mr. Woodhouse the contradiction his daughter points out between "his respect for brides and his dislike of marriage," Professor Mudrick is also surely missing a true Austenian complexity of some significance. Mr. Woodhouse's lack of his daughter's quick perception of individuals is indeed exquisitely ludicrous. "Considering we never saw her before," he observes to Emma of Mrs. Elton, "she seems a very pretty sort of young lady; and I dare say she was very pleased with you." Mrs. Elton, as we know, was no more pleased with Emma than Emma was with her. But when Emma goes on to tease him for being "no friend to matrimony but so anxious to pay your respects to a bride," we catch a glimpse of the reason why he is, for all his tiresomeness, so much loved and appreciated in the community.

"No, my dear, I never encourage anybody to marry, but I would always wish to pay every proper attention to a lady—and a bride, especially, is never to be neglected. More is avowedly due to *her*. A bride, you know, my dear, is always the first in company, let the others be who they may."

"Well, papa, if this is not encouragement to marry I do know what is. And I should never have expected you to be lending your sanction to such vanity-baits for poor young ladies."

"My dear, you do not understand me. This is a matter of mere common politeness and good-breeding, and has nothing to do with any encouragement to people to marry."

Emma had done. Her father was growing nervous, and could not understand *her*.

Good manners require that we behave towards people not as we feel about them as individuals, but as their position or predicament in life dictates. Mr. Woodhouse does not know that he knows this, but he grows nervous when his daughter questions his unconscious acceptance of it. Emma is rude to Miss Bates because she forgot (we might say that her unadmitted resentment of Jane Fairfax willed her to forget) the impoverished spinster status, and thought only of being witty at the expense of the boringly garrulous individual. The intimate impact is that Jane Austen and ourselves have often done the same kind of thing, and have afterwards (one hopes) been ashamed of it. In reading Jane Austen (as in reading Shakespeare and Tolstoy) we both do the deed and rue it.

The outlook of George Eliot may admit this kind of imperfection in the author and reader, but does her *art* ever enclose it? Isn't fallibility confined, by her outlook and method, to the characters themselves? If so, it may be the reason why our participation in the world of Jane Austen changes and shifts its emphasis with each re-reading; while our misunderstanding of George Eliot's, already fully enlightened and satisfied when our sense of the problems she treats is still youthfully theoretical, does not do so.

Although Mr. Woodhouse could not have separated the two ideas—Miss Bates as impoverished spinster and Miss Bates as bore—he could never have been guilty of his daughter's offence. The most instinctive good manners, we might infer, are usually found in those with the smallest powers of lively individual discrimination; and this would be a typically wry Austenian inference, for neither Emma nor her creator, nor we, if we are enjoying them, can ever aspire to *that* summit of good-breeding!

Emma and her father cannot understand one another, but this is no bar to their affection. Harmony, even intimacy, can exist in a community without mutual understanding—indeed must do, for we must live as we can. This acceptance of misunderstanding is the keynote of **Emma** perhaps, rather than a final confrontation of reality after a series of self-deceptions and misapprehensions. Emma is Emma still, as Lydia—at the end of **Pride and Prejudice**—is Lydia still. Most things, like Harriet's

partiality for Robert Martin, "must ever be unintelligible to her," as similar things must be to us all. We cannot contemplate Emma's awakening to understanding, because neither we nor Jane Austen can profess to know what such an "understanding" is. That pretension must be left to a later race of novelists. But we do know what her society is like, because like Emma and her friends we live in it as we read, and it is Jane Austen's achievement to leave us sharing rather than judging. Our judgements, like hers, are contingent on the inability to escape from the society in which she is writing, the boat—as it were—in which we and the other Highbury inhabitants are tossing together on the sea."*

*The ship as an image of her kind of social unit seems to have appealed to Jane Austen. Her enthusiasm for the Navy often strikes one as being more than just a family affair.

The saving irresponsibility of Jane Austen is her freedom, as the prisoner of that society, to say what she likes about it. It is astonishing to me that the prejudice should still linger that she is a constricting and censorious writer, a writer claustrophobically preoccupied with the right and the wrong thing. In fact it would be more accurate to see her works as a peculiar kind of liberation from morality. This was surely sensed by D. W. Harding in his notable essay, and also by Professor Litz, who quotes from the philosopher Shaftesbury this extremely significant sentence. "The natural free spirits of ingenious men, if imprisoned and controlled, will find out other ways of motion to relieve themselves in their constraint."

And yet the critics seem reluctant to admit the consequences of this relief, this freedom, and how it affects Jane Austen's whole creative method, particularly in the last three novels. I have tried to illustrate by quotation the misleading tightness of patterning which the critics imply when they exhibit the significance of contrast and relation in her novels. The patterns that criticism sees—and often illuminatingly sees—can none the less mislead unless we recognise that they are used by the author in order that she may escape from them. She uses the rigidity of society as a means of liberating her fancy and creative joy, whereas for later novelists the society they create is the product of their own interpretative and meaning-seeking vision.

This would be a way of saying that society as portrayed by George Eliot and Henry James is an *imagined* society. The town of **Middlemarch** is as much George Eliot's own construction—a realm adapted by and used by her imagination—as is the Florence she portrays in **Romola**. It could equally be said that the London of **The Princess Casamassima** and of **The Golden Bowl** have their unique and fascinating existence only in James's mind. For the social novelists at the end of the 19th century this must be so, because they cannot surrender themselves to society without sinking into a paralysing triviality. No social milieu holds them

so that "their natural free spirits" must find "other ways of motion." Society has become too vast and vague to be a prison, and the novelist cannot incarcerate himself voluntarily—that would be no substitute for the real thing. Any constraint must come from elsewhere, and it comes therefore from the novelist himself, from his involuntary abnegation of the "plastic" and the "irresponsible." Patterns of relation and of morality must now *really* mean something. They must stand up on their own, and they must support the imaginative structure of the whole work.

At the end of his essay on *Emma* Lionel Trilling observes, almost as if it were self-evident, that Highbury does not correspond to anything real in the England of the time, but has an ideal, an imagined status; that it is, in fact, Jane Austen's vision of a social unit, conceived in the interest of her social and moral purpose. Of course Jane Austen "made up" Highbury, as all novelists make up their fictions, but it was also the world she lived and had to live in—if it was not we could not live in it as we do, and ask the questions about it we do ask. Highbury is a real place, as Middlemarch and Henry James's Mayfair—even his Boston—are not; and its reality depends on its inescapability. George Eliot's places, we might note, are created either by meticulous and affectionate detail—she herself compared it to Dutch *genre* painting—or by an equally painstaking process of factual accumulation and research. Often the two are combined. Highbury is known by Jane Austen as Emma knows it by standing at the door of Ford's the draper. Though "much could not be hoped," still "she was amused enough, quite enough still to stand at the door. A mind lively and at ease can do with seeing nothing, and can see nothing that does not answer."

Highbury, we might say, is real because it does not have to be explored and because there is no alternative to it. Sanditon, it is true, might have been created by a more adventurous and less instinctual process, though the tentative fragment of Jane Austen's last novel is hardly enough to build any supposition on. What we do know is that she declined to attempt the creation of a world as the historical novelist attempts it: she declined to attempt giving the Saxe-Coburgs a local habitation and a name—that kind of imagined world was not for her and never would have been.

Although some of the most perceptive discussion of Jane Austen's world has come from America, it may be that the American mind does have difficulty in taking for granted the reality of Jane Austen's social units. Nothing in America is quite real in her way—perhaps because there is always an *alternative* to it. It may be that because American society is basically nomadic it is always in the state of becoming, of an idea about to arrive, and is never a fact. Henry James suggested something like this in a famous passage about the world in which Hawthorne grew up,

and it is certainly true that American fiction has always remained visionary, dominated by conscience, concept, and dream. We can see this even in popular contemporary slogans like "building the Great Society." And indeed where these kinds of attitudes and assumptions are concerned we might be said to be all Americans today.

Class, in our modern world, is of course even less real than place. And it may be this that leads Professor Trilling to assume not only that Highbury doesn't exist, but that Emma herself—in her attitudes to the world she lives in—is a snob, "a dreadful snob." The two assumptions certainly go together, for snobbery—as we know it today—is essentially a visionary activity, an undertaking of the fantasy. As such it may be doubted whether it has any true place in Jane Austen's world. Sir Walter Elliott is not a snob in our modern sense but a ludicrously self-complacent Narcissist, as vain of his complexion as he is of his baronetcy. Mrs. Clay is not a snob but a woman who knows her own advantage, and Mr. Collins is the same: to get on with the great is for them quite literally their meat and drink. Mrs. Elton gives herself absurd airs, but is so little a snob that she doesn't even realise there is anything in society for her to feel snobbish about. Her insensitivity is far too great for her to aspire to the title! And snobs are not only sensitive people but imaginative people; they are obsessed with their standing in relation to society, but to an idea of society which they themselves have created. Jane Austen was extremely interested in the large society that she knew, and in all the distinctions that it incontrovertibly contained: but she did not create her own picture of it, she did not *imagine* it..and neither do her characters.

Emma has her fixed and acknowledged place in society. No snob has. Indeed today very few of us have. Hence our preoccupation with the idea of snobbery, and our guilt about it, which has to a very large extent replaced, as has often been pointed out, feelings of shame and guilt about sex. Jane Austen's views on both matters were robust enough, but about class particularly so. I suspect she would have been both surprised and amused at the note of positive agitation in Professor Trilling's tone after he has quoted Emma's pert comment on Robert Martin: "A farmer can need none of my help, and is therefore in one sense as much above my notice as in every other way he is below it." "This is carefully contrived by the author, Professor Trilling assures us, "to seem as dreadful as possible; it quite staggers us, and some readers will even feel that the author goes too far in permitting Emma to make this speech."

The irony of the speech, surely, is that it contains a core of common sense which Emma doesn't act on. It is the case that Emma has nothing to say to Robert Martin and his family—why

should she have?—and they on their side are in no need of her help and advice. She and they are and should be quite independent of each other. But in fact she *does* interfere with them: she meddles by proxy in her relation with Harriet and in turning Harriet against them. Vain and vivaciously opinionated as she is, she ignores the soundness of her own instinct, the instinct of her own assured position. Mr. Knightly, who knows better than to meddle, would have endorsed the underlying sense of her remark, though he would have deplored the unbecomingly pert way in which she makes it. But what is really revealing about Professor Trilling's attitude is his assumption that Jane Austen, as if she were George Eliot, is intent here upon showing up Emma in the most "carefully contrived" way she can. Equally significant—because it implies a contradiction—is the note of apology on her behalf ("some readers will even feel . . .") in his comment that here perhaps Jane Austen has gone too far.

Of course she has gone too far! She, and we, are always doing so—in life, and in our mutual relation in a novel which is so like life. Jane Austen is not Emma, but equally she is not manipulating and showing up Emma: she is participating with unmistakable relish in the outrageous vivacity of her heroine. And so are we. Professor Trilling's hesitancy gives the clue to the way in which we read Jane Austen, and *Emma* in particular. We do not watch her expose her heroine: we share with her and her heroine—and what a privilege it is to do so!—our common lapses into superiority, complacency, bad taste; and we also share the sense that we can know these things in ourselves for what they are, that we have an idea of what is right and "know how to prize and respect it." Professor Trilling himself makes this point wonderfully well when he suggests that the relation between ourselves and Emma is "a strange one—it is the relation that exists between our ideal self and our ordinary fallible self"—and that "bad as her behaviour may be, we are willing to be implicated in it"—but he cannot forbear returning to the contemplation of Emma as a social phenomenon, a sister of later heroines like Emma Bovary and Isabel Archer, a heroine with a false and fantastic view of society and of the place she should occupy in it.

If Emma were really a snob, in the modern sense, she might, as I have suggested, be such a heroine. And the same would be true if Jane Austen, as Professor Trilling feels, had a view of society to which Emma does not conform. But Emma, whatever else she is, is not a romantic. She knows exactly where she stands in her society and what it can offer her. And snobbery in the 19th century was to become a social aspect of romanticism, the most widespread one. It is the role played by Madame Bovary, and in their more flagrant ways by the Veneerings and the Verdurins and Trollope's Mr. Crosby—even by Julien Sorel, for the figure of the snob in his heyday is related, unmistakably though, if we

like, ignobly, to the figure of the romantic solitary. All those romantic heroes in society are on their own.

And Emma is not on her own. Totally individual as she is, she is none the less a part of a community, and her existence depends upon the part she plays and will play in it. Her very mistakes arise from her dependence on it; her spirited sense of herself from her complete acceptance of the way it works. That sense of herself is as different as could be from the egocentric isolation of an Isabel Archer or even a Dorothea Brooke. It is because of that isolation that the creators of those heroines can contemplate them as "cases" as they do, and as they invite us to do. The fictional method of George Eliot and Henry James acquires its veracity from the historical isolation of the figures that they study in their society. Jane Austen's method depends on a very different sort of society, and a correspondingly different relation between author, character and reader.

It is because she did not need to invent her world that Jane Austen truly invents her characters. And the admirable studies in her craftsmanship and creative method by Miss Lascelles and Lord David Cecil have made it plain over what a prolonged and painstaking period of development the inventive process can extend. We can see it, for instance, in the line that may connect Lady Susan, through Mary Crawford, with Emma Woodhouse—the evolution of a type from a book into a completely self-sufficient individual. On a more trivial level we can see it in the perfect accord between the personality of Louisa Musgrove and her comedy accident on the Cobb at Lyme, an event which in its small way perfectly exemplifies the truth in Henry James's dictum: "What is character but the determination of incident? What is incident but the illustration of character?" Person and event match one another exactly, because a careful artistry of thoughts and second thoughts has been at work. Jane Austen's first notion for Louisa was probably a carriage accident, but two of her own acquaintances in real life had been hurt in them—too much reality—and they might happen to anybody—too much randomness.

But the real significance of Jane Austen's total invention of her characters lies elsewhere. It lies in the fact that her female heroines are imaginative realisations of herself. Is this fact—a very commonplace one where heroes and heroines are concerned—compatible with the claim to total invention? In her case I think it is, and the clue to how it is so is contained in the quotation from Shaftesbury. Such characters are "ways of motion" to relieve her constraint. Are they not in the case of Charlotte Brontë and George Eliot and a hundred others? Not exactly. The big difference between self-characterisation as we have it in Jane Austen, and as we have it in later novelists, is that "constraint"

for Jane Austen is the condition of life—accepted, uncomplained of. Her self-projections have thus a true grace of irresponsibility—they are at once a humorous indulgence and a spiritual exercise.

It is because she says : “Life has not put me in this position”—that she can make the figure she creates in it so endowed with herself and yet so separated. High pride in perception, and in beauty and wit; mockery; even cruelty;—these are some of the dangerous and spirited attributes—the sort that Yeats would have admired—which she exercises through her major figures. Particularly she indulges the fantasy of uninhibited display, and exchange with intellectual equals or with social superiors, the triumph of argument and the poised vigour of an expository *aria*. But equally she can indulge quite a different order of projection : the naïve simplicity and native good taste of Catherine Morland; the devout passivity and principle of Fanny Price; and—most moving of all—Anne Elliott’s fidelity to an image of love which seems to have no prospect of renewal.

Jane Austen, then, lived with her characters in a fashion analogous to the way in which she lived with real neighbours; only with the compulsion of that actuality transmuted into the freedom of creation. It is because of this that she can imply without compunction or apology her lack of understanding of what does not concern her daily existence. So, strangely enough, did Tolstoy, but he proclaims it openly, indeed defiantly. In the preface to **1805**, the first, unpublished version of **War and Peace**, he anticipated a possible charge of omitting much in the Russian society of the time by writing that “the lives of officials, merchants, theological students and peasants do not interest me and are only half comprehensible to me.” Though he did not print this preface in **War and Peace**, it is true of the completed novel as it was of the abortive one. By writing about the lives of the kind of people who were “comprehensible, interesting, and dear to me,” as he put it in the same preface, Tolstoy—like Jane Austen on her smaller scale—is not showing us something but living it for us, and with us.

The world of Tolstoy, like that of Jane Austen, seems complete because of his confidence that it was so : both have the confidence of insiders. And this gives to her world something of the Tolstoyan power of effortless expansion, the negligent authority of a world that is possessed without being contemplated. Not so with George Eliot : indeed it is difficult not to feel that E. M. Forster made what is in some respects a misleading comparison when he suggested in **Aspects of the Novel** that **Middlemarch** is the closest English equivalent to **War and Peace**. Its scale may suggest an analogy, but it is surely very different in spirit and in method. Far too scientific and comprehensive an interest is shown in the creation and examination of **Middlemarch** as a society for it to

resemble Tolstoy's, or Jane Austen's, societies. Because the intellectuals—George Eliot as much as Henry James—are outside life, they are interested in everything that life has to offer to their contemplation—an omnivorous interest is laid upon them as a sacred duty.

Jane Austen's affinity with Tolstoy appears even more striking if we consider the theme of *Anna Karenina*. There the relation of Anna and Vronsky to society is as categorical as that of Jane Austen's heroes and heroines. It is when they leave society, assuming that they can continue to be the same persons outside it, that we are led by the author's process to perceive them indeed from the outside, to contemplate them as cases, self-deceived and self-defining. Stiva, Anna's brother, who for all his shortcomings does not and cannot go outside the social world of the novel, is never seen in this defining way. Like Mr. Woodhouse he is a vessel of grace in spite of himself; and Tolstoy's creative insight, almost unwillingly admits him as such.

In a doggerel poem, D. H. Lawrence claimed that Russian society "might have been saved" by "a pair of rebels like Anna and Vronsky." Hardly. It is the pair themselves who are destroyed, not because society rejects them, but because their voluntary exile from society compels them to realise how much they are a part of it, and how much they owe to it their existence as the individuals Tolstoy had shown them to be. Had Emma, like "Miss Churchill of Enscombe," been guilty of so great an unawareness of her dependence on the society she knew, she would cease to be the Emma we know. She also would have been seen from the outside as Miss Churchill—"who wanted at once to be the wife of Captain Weston and Miss Churchill of Enscombe"—is seen from the outside.

It goes without saying that Jane Austen could not in the nature of things have performed Tolstoy's massive feat of sustaining a deep inner acceptance of society—with all it adds to the vitality and certainty of his characters—together with an external vision of it, and of them when they have put themselves outside society. His ruthless comprehensiveness, his masculine freedom, could conjecture and continue to the bitter end where she could not. Her power to suggest and explore stops short at the boundaries within which she lived and wrote, but in her greatest novels the very act of stopping short is a peculiar tender of significance and illumination.

We can see this in the case of Jane Fairfax. Emma's coolness towards Jane Fairfax, and the reasons for it, is one of the best realised things in the novel; and, like Miss Bates's style of talk, it acquires dramatic resonance as the novel proceeds to its climax. We find its dramatic centre in the novel's most pregnant single phrase, when after the Box Hill expedition Emma has gone to see

Miss Bates and Jane, and Jane has avoided her. Emma "sat musing on the difference of woman's destiny." Hers she can await openly and eagerly, and the contrast with Jane Fairfax's muffled, uncharted resignation is perhaps the author's deepest as it is her least emphatic theme. The drama involved is in Jane Austen's own unmistakable attachment to Emma's feelings about Jane Fairfax, and how these feelings are not dispelled but cease to count in the revelation of the innerness of Jane Fairfax's feelings and situation.

The situation folded by Jane Austen into her treatment of Jane Fairfax is most fully realised in the treatment of Sonia in **War and Peace**. It has pained many of Tolstoy's admirers that he should seem to regard as so eminently natural and right the latent hostility that both Natisha and her mother instinctively feel towards Sonia. At bottom it is the involuntary antipathy of those whose destiny it is to fill a place in society, and to "be themselves," against those who have no place and who cannot be. Both Tolstoy and Jane Austen understand it perfectly, and accept it as they accept the society of which it seems an inevitable part. Neither author attempts to get inside the character thus muffled by society; neither give a voice to those who have not one of their own. All the more remarkable is Jane Austen's success in revealing Jane Fairfax's sense of her own position, for this is not done through her own speech or consciousness but through Emma's, and Emma's realisations about "woman's destiny."

Tolstoy's grand allotment of fates in **War and Peace**—fates which turn out to be "inevitable" because he and society have allotted them—has something in common with Jane Austen's undercurrent of interest in the necessities of resignation, necessities which in her last three novels may be said to collide with her instinct for a proper fictional *dénouement*. How she resolves, or fails to resolve, the difficulty provides the most striking insight of all into the peculiar freedom and intimacy of her art to describe which I borrowed James's term "irresponsible." In **Mansfield Park**, for all its virtues, no resolution is achieved. The situation of Fanny, the perception of her divided feelings about Mansfield Park and Portsmouth, and of her half-admiring, half-hostile relation to Mary Crawford—a relation which carries a hint of Jane Fairfax's with Emma—these instance the real pressures conceived and conveyed in **Mansfield Park**. There are many more of the same quality, but none of them harmonise with the arbitrary winding-up of the plot. Fanny's triumphant marriage is not earned nor even indulged by anything crucial in the presentation of her; and the Crawfords, with the younger Bertrams, simply collapse into limbo. "Let other pens than mine dwell on guilt and misery." This is not the irresponsibility we can prize and participate in with her, but mere abdication, more elegant and light-hearted than it would be with professionals of a later date, but no more satisfying.

In *Emma* the case is very different. It seems to me that the harmony established in both between a deep and serious acknowledgement of the unrecorded, unremitted sadness of things, and the never impossible *peripeteia* of joy and surprise, gives them a unique status as fictional masterpieces. Jane Fairfax's destiny, we feel, was to disappear as a governess into that limbo which Jane Austen imagines with such quiet but terrible realism. Frank Churchill saves her from it, but even so it remains psychologically a part of her,—the irony of his insensitivity and frivolity is that they parallel the insensitive carelessness or kindness of an employer "not quiet of human flesh, but of human intellect." Emma's happy fate is very different; it will lead her into that world of "intelligent love" which an anonymous reviewer of Jane Austen so eloquently spoke of.* But this solution of ideality and light would not be complete without its obscured and patient opposite. Tolstoy exhibits a kind of fictional diplomacy, not dissimilar in the effect it leaves with us, at the end of *War and Peace*. The good of life, so lyrically summed up in the married dialogues of the Epilogue, does not distract us from but rather draws our attention to its varieties of suffering and deprivation, things which were beginning to haunt Tolstoy in ways which had little to do with art and fiction; but which, in his great work, combine with the joy of its ending, and continue in our minds beyond the ending. Tolstoy's "irresponsibility" is a massive affair: he sees "in the irresponsible plastic way" even where he disapproves, perhaps all the more where he does so. Jane Austen's is more subtle, more imponderable; but it leads her art along the same paths and towards the same fulfilments.

*In the *North British Review*, 1870. I owe to Professor Trilling (who himself acknowledges a similar debt to Professor Joseph Duffy) my acquaintance with this remarkable appreciation. I should add that in spite of my differing with Professor Trilling's views on the points mentioned earlier I admire and concur with the conclusion of his own essay on *Emma*, in which he refers to the *North British* reviewer's comments on the ideal of "intelligent love" in the novel.



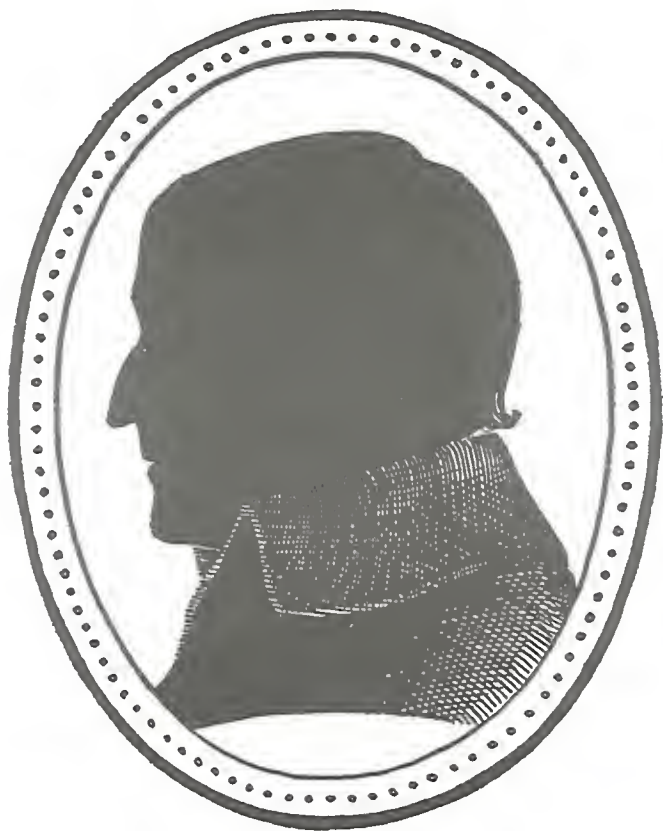
I regret to announce the death of my wife, Mrs. Catherine Lydia Margaret Carpenter, one of our Trustees on the 16th July, 1967, in whose memory I have added to the funds forming the Trust Endowment Securities of the value of £5000.0.0., in order to secure as far as may be possible the house in Chawton where Jane Austen lived until her death at Winchester in 1817.

T. EDWARD CARPENTER,

Chairman of Trustees.

THE JANE AUSTEN SOCIETY

Report for the Year, 1968



The Revd. George Austen

THE JANE AUSTEN SOCIETY

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THE JANE AUSTEN SOCIETY

Report for the year 1968

Membership

One hundred and twelve new members joined during the year, of whom thirty-one became Life Members, as did fourteen old members. Total membership now stands at 1,246. In 1958 membership stood at 830, thus in ten years membership has increased by 50%. Of present members, 160 live in the U.S.A., of which number ten represent institutions or libraries.

Members are reminded that subscriptions are due on 1st January, and that this Report is the only reminder that they will receive. The Hon. Secretary would much appreciate prompt payment of the 5/- Annual Subscription, and will gladly provide a Banker's Order Form.

Annual General Meeting

The Annual Meeting was held at Chawton House, on Saturday, 20th July, by kind permission of Major and Mrs. Edward Knight, when nearly 450 members and their friends were present. Lord David Cecil presided.

Opening the meeting, the President referred to Miss Beatrix Darnell, a co-founder of the Society, who had reached the age of 95 in June, and who, due to a recent fall, was not well enough to be present. The minutes of the last Annual General Meeting were taken as read.

The Hon. Secretary presented the Report for 1967. This was seconded by Mr. N. Hale and carried.

The Hon. Treasurer presented the Accounts for 1967. Their adoption was proposed by Miss M. Dean, seconded by Mrs. Folwell Coan, and carried.

Sir William Makins proposed the re-election as President of Lord David Cecil, and of the Duke of Wellington, Mr. T. Edward Carpenter and Mr. John Gore as Vice-Presidents. This was seconded by Mrs. Franklin Walker, and carried.

Lord David Cecil proposed the re-election of Sir William Makins as Chairman, and that the Committee be re-elected en bloc.

The meeting was addressed by Mr. Brian C. Southam, who took as his subject "Jane Austen and Her Readers."

A vote of thanks was proposed by Mr. Peter Knatchbull-Hugessen, seconded by Dr. Charles Murrah, and carried.

The President closed the meeting by thanking Major and Mrs. Edward Knight for once again lending Chawton House for the meeting. Tea tickets raised nearly £80 for the Chawton Church funds.

Annual General Meeting, 1969

The Annual General Meeting will be held at Chawton House on Saturday, 19th July. The meeting will be addressed by Miss Elizabeth Bowen, C.B.E., LL.D.

Walcot Church, Bath

The attention of the Committee has been drawn to the state of the slab covering the grave of Jane Austen's father, the Rev. George Austen (1731-1805), in Walcot Church. The grave is in the Crypt, just inside the door leading from the graveyard. The crypt is being turned into a clubroom, and thus everyone using the room will walk over the stone and eventually obliterate the inscription, which, as the photograph shows, is already in poor condition.

An offer by the Committee to pay for the removal of the stone to a position where it may be seen and preserved has been accepted by the Rector and Parochial Church Council of Walcot Church.

The Original of "Highbury"

The following letter was found among the papers of the late Lord Arthur Russell (1825-1892).

Bray Vicarage.
October 21st. 1869.

Dear Sir,

In answer to your note, I am writing to say that my aunt, Miss Jane Austen, once told me that the "Highbury" described in her novel *Emma* was the town of Leatherhead, and not Cobham, as some readers have supposed.

I remain, my dear Sir,

Yours faithfully,

J. E. Austen-Leigh.

On comparing the handwriting with manuscripts made by Mr. Austen-Leigh, at Bray Vicarage, no resemblance was found. But it is reasonable to assume that this letter may be a copy.

The Rev. James Edward Austen-Leigh (1798-1874) was the son of Jane Austen's eldest brother James, by his second marriage, to Mary Lloyd. He was Vicar of Bray from 1851 until his death. He assumed the name of Leigh in addition to Austen on inheriting the estates of his great-aunt, Mrs. James Leigh Perrot.

Under this stone rests the remains of

The Rev. GEORGE AUSTIN.

Rector of Steventon and Dean in Truro.

Who departed this life

the 24th January 1805.

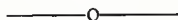
Aged 73 Years.

The following extract from the Vestry Minutes of Leatherhead Church gives weight to the supposition that Jane Austen knew the town.

1761 25th October.

"Whereas Mr. Knightly has at his own expense and with the consent and approbation of Mr. Gore and Mr. Clear and a full Vestry removed the pew which stood under the pulpit, placed it where the old reading desk did stand, raised the pulpit to a much more convenient height and erected a new reading desk and seat for the clerk under the same, which are highly ornamental to the church and very commodious to the congregation, it is hereby ordered that the thanks of this Vestry in the name of themselves and this whole parish be paid in the most respectful manner to Mr. Knightly for this fresh mark of his regard for their Parish and that Mr. Sanders (a Churchwarden) and Mr. Wickham be desired to wait upon him for that purpose. R. Laxton, Vicar."

There is a Randalls Road in Leatherhead, and there used to be a Randalls Park. This has been demolished to make room for a Crematorium.

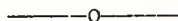


Jane Austen in Bath

Mrs. Jean Freeman has written a booklet, **Jane Austen in Bath**, to be published by the Society.

Copies may be obtained from :-

The Selborne Bookshop, Selborne, Alton, Hampshire.
Price 6/6d. (post free).



Jane Austen—The Months of Fame

It may surprise admirers of Jane Austen to learn that during her lifetime when four of her principal novels had been published, no more than a dozen reviews of her books are known to have been printed. More than that, between 1817 and 1870, only six out of fifty reviewers took her as their chief subject. Scott in 1816, Whately in 1821 recognised in her work a new school of novel writing. In the 1840's George Lewes and Macaulay lifted her towards classic status, but a further decade and more elapsed before another serious essay on her art and rank as a novelist saw print. If by that time she had become caviare to a few discerning critics, she was still largely appreciated merely as a



Dr. Richard Whatley (1787-1863), Archbishop of Dublin, wearing the badge of Chancellor of the Order of St. Patrick.

From an engraving of the portrait by Catterson Smith.

(Representative Church Body, Dublin)

(I am indebted to the Countess of Iveagh, great-great-granddaughter of Fanny, Lady Knatchbull, Jane Austen's niece, for obtaining this illustration. —Ed.)

pleasant story teller by ladies who frequented town and country libraries and read for recreation novels the bulk of which she herself regarded as trash. In her lifetime and for sometime beyond, the novel, with a few outstanding exceptions, had still to be accepted as a branch of literature, as a medium of thought more important than recreational. Her life-time fame was brief indeed, can be measured in months and was restricted in range.

We may accept it that a craftsman of genius, working in any field, recognises that the work of his hand is good and derives satisfaction from the knowledge. In Jane Austen's case, from her childhood to near her early death, the urge to write was the spur. She was reticent and for long preferred anonymity, satisfied with a family audience of intelligent critics. Her months of fame may be judged to have begun in 1815 and continued into 1816 when she was often in London with her brother Henry. If then fame became the spur, it became so first in that historic year which she shares with the victor of Waterloo.

Sense and Sensibility had appeared in 1811, **Pride and Prejudice** in 1813, **Mansfield Park** in 1814 and **Emma** was to follow in 1816. She knew of Scott's first generous tribute; William Gifford in 1813 had highly recommended **Pride and Prejudice** to John Murray. Miss Mitford had expressed her praise and Jane Austen had sent a copy of **Mansfield Park** to the only contemporary woman novelist whom she genuinely admired—Maria Edgeworth. Henry Austen acted vigorously as her P.R.O. The Regent's pompous Chaplain had flattered her and (for what it was worth) assured her that H.R.H. kept a set of her novels at his bedside and that the mixed household at Petworth were enthusiastic readers. Her secret was out and each month henceforth her fame would surely grow.

But within 18 months by the irony of fate, in her lodgings under the Cathedral Tower at Winchester, she was craving not for mundane immortality but for death and peace after pain. She died and was buried and her works, so far as literary criticism was concerned, were buried with her. As with Trollope (but for very different reasons) her novels decreased in appeal. The early Victorians and their immediate predecessors began to demand "literature of scope and power, strongly drawn and vigorous in the manner of Scott, the Brontës, Thackeray and Dickens, writers who seemed to engage much wider areas of society and deeper levels of human experience". By comparison Jane Austen's art was seen as narrow, provincial, lacking in seriousness of view, at least in England.

Bentley's, it is true, included her works in their **Standard Novels** series in 1833 with those of such ladies as Mrs. Gore and Mrs. Archbold, but there was no brisk sale. It was not until 1870 with the publication of Austen-Leigh's **Memoir** that the trend

began to widen to examine her methods and art, and it was as recently as 1939 that Mary Lascelles opened the floodgates of criticism which long ago a few discerning critics such as Scott, Whately, Macaulay, Lewes, Mrs. Oliphant and Kavanagh had prised open a little way.

But if the pundits of literature had been slow to recognise her merits, a small circle in polite society had come to appreciate her. My father related how on a visit to Bowood, Lord Lansdowne, Edwardian Statesman, confessed to him that he had "never read Miss Austen's novels." My father was shocked; he had been luckier. At the far end of the drawing-room in the house where he spent his youth, stood a long bookshelf filled with the novels of his Aunt, Lady Emily Ponsonby, with Miss Ferrier's competent work (so far more profitable on publication than Jane Austen's), with Emily Eden's two "Semi's"; and among them stood **Pride and Prejudice**, a gem of purest ray in a cluster of stage jewellery. The house was not over-loaded with books. Lady Emily's three-deckers were read as a matter of family duty, but the others were all well read, and **Pride and Prejudice** was quoted at family meals, not constantly as with Dickens, but with relish and appreciation.

Among the wealth of second-rate lady novelists of the period. the influence of Jane Austen over their own plots and characterisation is sometimes seen. Miss Eden was born in 1797 and her **Semi-attached Couple** was written 30 years before its publication in 1860. In it she not only mentions **P. and P.**, but discreetly cribbed from it; for there is more than a faint resemblance between the Bennets and the Douglasses in their environments. Miss Eden was often at Bowood, and I make no doubt there was a copy of **P. and P.** in the library, if Lord Lansdowne had cared to find it.

With the publication of the **Memoirs**, the dam was breached and Richard Simpson, Shakespearean Scholar, in his notice of it in the **N. British Review** (April 1870) launched the torrent of literary criticism of Jane Austen's art which now requires a large section in a national library to contain it. There must be many hundreds of her lovers who continue to enjoy her uncritically and might be tempted to murmur:

"No farther seek her merits to disclose," when for example comparison with the Russian giants is introduced to estimate the art of a shy miniaturist in a Hampshire village, and to wonder what might have been Jane Austen's reaction to so ponderous an examination into her technique. Irony was her strong suit. it is Fate's.

The latest author of a critical work on her assures us that "the 20th century has so far failed to provide an account of Jane Austen which is historically sound and at the same time

satisfying in its perception of the experience of life that is rendered in the novels”.

I refer to Mr. B. C. Southam whose address to the Society in 1968 is printed in this number and was very highly appreciated. His exhaustive research in his **Jane Austen in the Critical Heritage Series** (Routledge) has provided many of the facts given in this paper and, factual and authoritative, he has made a book of importance in the Library of the Society and in all others which devote a shelf to Austeniana.

So in the estimable future we may expect no falling off in literary criticism of her art. None should minimise the influence of literary critics in establishing works of genius. It is true that tastes sometimes change and reputations rise and fall, and it may be that the surest guide to the “Classic”, the safest selection of “The hundred best”, the guarantee of Jane Austen’s immortality, rests with that larger class—the average readers who remain faithful from generation to generation, caring more for what she gave them than for how she got it.

John Gore.

Without the Gift of Tongues

Members of the Jane Austen Society who attended the Annual General Meeting in 1958 will remember the pleasure of hearing M. René Varin talk about the French attitude towards Jane Austen’s works. He emphasised the difficulties of making a satisfactory translation of her writing, mentioned how hard it is to capture the subtleties of her style in French, discussed the “pitfalls” which her titles present to a translator, pointed out that the shades of meaning in such important abstract terms as “personality” and “character” are not easily analysed even by expert linguists. He informed us that he himself read **Mansfield Park** in translation when he was a student at the Sorbonne, and told us that the translation he studied was published in 1816. The date startles by bringing sudden awareness that a translation of **Mansfield Park** into French was made during Jane Austen’s life time. It was not the only novel turned into French before her death. **Sense and Sensibility** had appeared in 1815, and **Emma** appeared in the year following.

In 1929, a bibliography of Jane Austen’s works was published by the great bibliographer, Geoffrey Keynes, who has since been knighted. Of the French translations he could write at that time: “The remarkable fact that all Jane Austen’s novels were translated into French and published in Paris within a few years of their appearance in England has almost escaped the notice of

her biographers and critics." He noted the important point that "Some of these translations are the first illustrated editions of the novels," and observed that satisfactory French equivalents for titles are apparently not easily found.

Commenting on the popularity which these early French translations enjoyed, the bibliographer found it "singular" that there is no reference in Jane Austen's remaining letters to the novels translated during her life, and suggested that the translations may have been made without her knowledge. It is probable, indeed, that they were, for though a form of Copyright did exist in Jane Austen's time (writing to her brother Francis on 3rd July, 1813, she said: "You will be glad to hear that every Copy of *S. and S.* is sold and that it has brought me £140 besides the Copyright, if that shd ever be of any value"), there were then no Copyright laws as we know them today, and there was no Copyright Agreement between countries. The Spaniards also made one early translation. It was of *Pride and Prejudice*, and noting its publication in Madrid in 1824, Sir Geoffrey Keynes said that it was the only other translation of Jane Austen of which he then knew.

When Dr. Chapman published *A Critical Bibliography* of Jane Austen's works in 1955, he added to the list of translations one of *Persuasion* published in Madrid in 1899, and several more recent ones: three more in Spanish, *Persuasion*, *Northanger Abbey*, *Pride and Prejudice* (all before 1924); an Italian *Pride and Prejudice* in 1935; two German translations of *Pride and Prejudice*, 1939 and 1948; and three in Finnish: *Pride and Prejudice*, *Emma*, and *Persuasion*, all appearing between 1949 and 1951. The British Museum possesses a copy of a French translation of *Northanger Abbey*, entitled *Catherine Morland*, made by M. Félix Fenelon, and published in Paris in the same year as the Spanish translation of *Persuasion*, 1899.

Examination of the *Index Translationem*, a valuable work compiled under the auspices of U.N.E.S.C.O., reveals astonishing facts about the growth of world interest in the writings of Jane Austen. Within the past twenty years her novels have been translated into so many languages that the modest Hampshire authoress who began her public life under the nom-de-plume of "A Lady" has become a vital part of what the Unesco Secretariat calls in the Preface to the Index "an extremely interesting and valuable cultural interchange." Or so it may be supposed, for without being able to read *Pride and Prejudice* as published in Seoul in the Korean language, or *Emma* as translated into Arabic, it is difficult to know how much of Jane Austen's art and personality find expression in these unfamiliar surroundings.

Statistics generally make dull reading for the literary-minded. There seems, however, no way of attempting to suggest the scope

of translations other than by numerical lists. Nineteen volumes of the Index, covering the years 1948 through 1966, are now published. They show that five countries have all six novels translated into their native tongues: Finland, France, Germany, Italy and Yugoslavia. A striking fact is that the Italian translations give evidence that from 1951 on, greater interest in Jane Austen's work has been taken in Italy than in any other country. Two separate translations each of **Mansfield Park**, **Persuasion** and **Northanger Abbey** were made, four separate translations of **Sense and Sensibility**, five of **Emma**, and about a dozen of **Pride and Prejudice**. Portugal comes next, numerically speaking, with four separate translations of **Pride and Prejudice** (a fifth, if a Brazilian one is counted), two of **Persuasion** and four of **Northanger Abbey**. An interesting point about the Finnish translations is that those made of each novel seem to have been so satisfactory that they have gone into several editions rather than multiplying by numbers of new translations, as they have in Italy. By 1960, the Finnish translation of **Emma** had already reached its fifth edition. It is noticeable that interest in Jane Austen is less pronounced in Germany and France today than in the other countries mentioned above. There is some evidence that it may be increasing in Germany. A German reporter wrote a most interesting and sympathetic account of Jane Austen and Bath for the **Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung** on the occasion of the 150th Anniversary of Jane's death in 1967. A new translation of **Mansfield Park** into German was published in 1968. But the France of General de Gaulle seems not to be drawn to Jane Austen. A literary friend in Paris writes that Jane Austen is considered too "gentle" and unreal to appeal to the mentality of the French public today. They prefer Dickens.

To come to the individual novels: without doubt the most widely translated is **Pride and Prejudice**. It exists in translation in more than twenty-five languages, representing three continents. In nine countries it is the only novel by which Jane Austen is known in translation: Czechoslovakia, Ceylon, Denmark, Greece, Hungary, Iran, Israel, Korea and Siam. (An Icelandic translation also exists, published in Reykjavik in 1956). The next most translated novels are **Persuasion**, **Emma** and **Northanger Abbey**: **Persuasion** in Dutch, Finnish, French (early translation), German, Italian, Japanese, Polish, Portuguese, Spanish (including Buenos Aires), Swedish, Swiss (German Swiss), and Yugoslavian; **Emma** in Arabian, Chinese, Dutch, Finnish, French (early), German, Italian, Polish, Portuguese, Spanish (perhaps—there is an uncertainty about title here), Turkish and Yugoslavian; **Northanger Abbey** in Dutch, Finnish, French (early), German, Italian, Japanese (another uncertainty about title), Portuguese, Spanish (including Argentine), and Yugoslavian. At least nine countries have translations of **Sense and Sensibility**. This novel seems a favourite

among the Dutch and the Belgians. **Mansfield Park** is the least often translated, but the Finns, the French, the Germans, the Italians, probably the Portuguese (though an element of uncertainty exists about the title), the Spaniards and the Yugoslavians know this book.

Two observations on points which do not emerge from the above statistics are worth making: one is that translations of **Pride and Prejudice** exist in Bengali (1954), in Telugu (1958) and in Kannada (1962). There is also a Bengali translation of **Sense and Sensibility** (1955). The other point is the marked absence of interest in Jane Austen in Scandinavian countries except Sweden. Into Swedish all but **Mansfield Park** and **Northanger Abbey** have been translated, in Denmark only **Pride and Prejudice** is known in translation, in Norway no translations at all have been recorded.

M. Varin's remark about the "pitfalls" presented by the titles is supported by the evidence of the Index. He said that "**Orgueil et Préjugé** sounds ridiculous to a French ear." Ridiculous or not, that has remained the French title of **Pride and Prejudice** to its most recent recorded translation in 1966; it is also used in Italy: **Orgoglio e Pregiudizio**; in Spain: **Orgullo y Prejuicio**; in Portugal: **Orgulho e Preconceito**. Sir Charles Stirling confirms that "Preconceito" is the usual Portuguese word for "Prejudice" in the sense of preconceived opinion. The idea of prejudgement which *anticipates*, which is in the word 'prejudice', has given rise to the use of **Prevenzione** in one Italian translation of the title, as it did in an early French translation (1822) called **Orgueil et Prévention**. This sense of the word is still familiar in English in two Collects in the Book of Common Prayer: "by Thy special grace preventing us" and "Lord we pray that Thy grace may always prevent and follow us."

The title **Emma** is the least altered in translation and is **Emma** in most languages. But it is **Immā** in Arabic, and, delightfully, **I Ma** in Chinese (dialect not stated). The Portuguese, however, extended the title to **Fantasias de Emá** ("Emma's Fancies"). and one Italian translation is entitled **La Famiglia Woodhouse** (1959). Not infrequently the names of one or more characters are used as titles: Elinor and Marianne for **Sense and Sensibility**, Catherine Morland for **Northanger Abbey**, even **De Gezusters Bennet** in a Dutch translation of **Pride and Prejudice** (1964). The title of **Mansfield Park** usually holds its own form, but an Italian translation of 1965 is called **Villa Mansfield** by the same translator who, in 1962, called his translation of **Persuasion**, **Ritorno a Te**. **Persuasion** and **Sense and Sensibility** have, as might be expected, lent themselves to more imaginative treatment in titles. A charming Italian version of the latter is **Sensibile Amore** (1961), and the title of the Portuguese translation of

1961 is **Razoes do Coração**, "Reasons of the Heart".

The Finnish titles of the six novels have been explained to me by a young native of Helsinki: **Järki Ja Tunteet** (**Sense and Sensibility**) and **Ylpeys Ja Ennakkoluulo** (**Pride and Prejudice**) are exact translations of the English words into Finnish, and **Emma** remains **Emma**. But **Mansfield Park** bears a title which may be translated as "The Stepdaughter's Story", **Persuasion** one which may be interpreted as the "Playful Heart" (!), and **Northanger Abbey** becomes "A Maiden in an Old Castle." As the Finns are (or were) predominantly Lutherans, abbeys were not part of their experience.

Since French is probably the foreign language most familiar to English-speaking peoples, and because the British Museum possesses the only copy in Great Britain of one of the French translations made nearest to Jane Austen's time, that of **Northanger Abbey**, it may be of interest to consider, finally, the early translations into French, and that of **L'Abbaye de Northanger** in particular. Sir Geoffrey Keynes pointed out that copies of these early translations are exceedingly rare. He found the complete series in their original wrappers in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris, and as one deeply concerned with the condition as well as the contents of books, he rejoiced in their excellent state of preservation, commenting that those particular copies appeared never to have been read! But many others undoubtedly were read, since nine editions appeared in France between 1815 and 1828. Here, then, is the list of the first translations ever made in one country of Jane Austen's works; the sub-titles given them have an interest all their own :

—**Raison et Sensibilité**

ou les Deux Manières d' Aimer 1815

Traduit librement de l' anglais par Mme Isabelle de Montolieu

—New edition of same 1828

—**La Nouvelle Emma**

ou les Caractères Anglais du Siècle 1816

Traduit de l' anglais [Translator not named]

—**Le Parc de Mansfield**

ou les Trois Cousines 1816

Traduit de l' anglais par M. Henri V** [Villemain]

—**La Famille Elliot**

ou L' Ancienne Inclination 1821

Traduction libre de l' anglais par Mme. de Montolieu

—New edition of same 1828

—**Orgueil et Prévention** 1822

Traduit de l'anglais par Mlle. E.** [Mlle. Éloise Perks]

—New edition called **Orgueil et Préjugé** 1822

—**L'Abbaye de Northanger** 1824

Traduit de l'anglais de Jeanne Austen

Par Mme. Hyacinthe de F** [Ferrières]

The copy of **L'Abbaye de Northanger** now in the British Museum came apparently from a Cabinet de Lecture in Amsterdam. The date of acquisition stamped on it is 16th September, 1876. There are three small volumes, well printed on fine quality paper in Metz, published in Paris by Pigoreau in the place St. Germain l'Auxerrois in 1824. The original wrappers have been destroyed, not surprisingly, for the life of paper covers in a lending library of earlier days cannot have been long. The books are now bound in unattractive, shabby, hard covers, but their internal condition is good. The only illustration is that reproduced here; it is the frontispiece and title page of volume I.

Though it would be of great interest to know more about the translator, Mme. Hyacinthe de Ferrières, biographical information about her is not readily available. Her name appears, however, in the Catalogue Général des Livres Imprimés de la Bibliothèque Nationale, as the authoress of two books written prior to her translation of **Northanger Abbey: Le Jeune William ou l'observateur anglais**. 2 vols., 1806; **Le Secret heureux et funeste**, 2 vols., 1808.

Mme. de Ferrières prefaces her translation by a 'Notice Biographique' about Jane Austen. This proves to be a translation of Henry Austen's Biographical Notice added to the posthumous publication of **Northanger Abbey** and **Persuasion** in 1818. but with some differences. Though in the following sentence one error is doubtless rather the fault of the printer than of Mme. de Ferrières, a comparison between the original and the translation shows the subtle way in which meaning is changed. Henry wrote: "Her favourite moral writers were Johnson in prose and Cowper in verse." This is rendered as "Ses écrivains favoris furent John (*sic*) pour la morale, et Cowper pour la poésie." Two sentences concerned with the end of Jane's life reveal in their translation not only lack of understanding of Henry's pious intentions, but are also guilty of factual inaccuracies. Henry wrote: "She made a point of receiving the sacrament before excessive bodily weakness might have rendered her perception unequal to her wishes." Mme. de Ferrières translated: "Elle voulait recevoir publiquement les derniers sacrement, mais son excessive faiblesse ne le lui permit pas." And Henry's sentence "Jane Austen was buried on the 24th of July, 1817, in the

L'ABBAYE DE NORTHANGER.



*Un grand coffre noir ! que contait-il ! comment
est-il placé ici !*

Tome II, Page 204.

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L'ABBA YE

DE NORTHANGER;

Traduit de l'anglais de JEANNE AUSTEN,

AUTEUR D'ORGUEIL ET PRÉJUGÉ, DU PARC DE MANS-
FIELD, DE LA FAMILLE ELLIOT, DE LA NOUVELLE
EMMA, etc.

Par M^{me}. HYACINTHE DE F****.

TOME PREMIER.

PARIS,
PIGOREAU, Libraire, place Saint-Germain-
l'Auxerrois, n°. 20.

1824.

Cathedral Church of Winchester, which, in the whole catalogue of its mighty dead does not contain the ashes of a brighter genius or a sincerer Christian" is translated as "Jeanne Austen fut inhumée le 24 juillet, dans une chapelle de la Cathédrale de Windschester (*sic*) où reposent le cendres d'un grand nombre de personnages célèbres."

Comparison between the original text of the novel and its translation discloses in the very first sentence a bending of meaning which becomes frequent. "No one who had ever seen Catherine Morland in her infancy would have supposed her born to be a heroine" is translated "De toutes les personnes qui ont connu Catherine Morland dans son enfance i'l n'en est pas qui aient dû la croire née pour figurer comme héroïne de roman." But Jane though creating the heroine of a novel, did not label Catherine as such. Her realistic approach to the characters she drew gave her style a directness which this translator never captures. Mme. de Ferrières writes in her own style, making her own paragraph divisions, sometimes changing the order of remarks, occasionally skipping. But her dialogue is brisk, and, on the whole, her translation is permeated by a lively spirit which suggests that she appreciated the liveliness of the author. She does not always understand Jane's idiom: "the capital pen of a sister author" becomes, almost unbelievably, "l' elegante plume de la soeur d'un de nos meilleurs auteurs." In the sentence immediately preceding, however, in which Jane characteristically advised a woman to appear imbecile when engaged in attracting a man, Mme. de Ferrières does the original the justice of an exact translation of meaning: "Une femme surtout qui a quelques talents, doit mettre tous ses soins à ne les laisser paraître que le moins possible."

Missing from the translation are many specific descriptive words and statements which set time and place, and give atmosphere to the original narrative. When, for instance, Maria Thorpe is telling Catherine about the excitements of the previous day, she speaks of having "laid out some shillings in purses and and spars, thence adjourned to eat ice at a pastry-cook's." In translation this becomes "qu'ils avaient dépensé quelques schelings à acheter des bagatelles qu'ils avaient été prendre des glaces"—surely there is a vast difference between merely eating ices and eating one at a pastry-cook's! Again, Miss Andrews in her "puce-coloured sarsenet" seems a different creature from Mme. de Ferrières' Miss Andrews who had "une robe brune." But a far, far greater attribute of the original is also missing—the fine irony is hardly ever conveyed. Nothing in Mme. de Ferrières' translation can even suggest the real significance of the sentence "This was a pitch of friendship beyond Catherine." nor achieve the economy of its wording.

Modern translators may do better, but the task remains a

a difficult one. Four years after Jane Austen's death, and scarcely a year before his own, Shelley wrote in his **Defence of Poetry** (1821): "it were as wise to cast a violet into a crucible that you might discover the formal principle of its colour and odour, as seek to transfuse from one language to another the creations of a poet." Jane Austen was no poet, but there is a delicacy in her style which must always resist transfusion.

Ruth M. Robbins.

Postscript

Information received from Lisbon gives assurance that all six novels of Jane Austen have been translated into Portuguese since 1943, and "enjoying unabated popularity." Six countries, therefore, know all six novels in their native tongues. Brazil might perhaps count as a seventh, for Brazilian-Portuguese differs somewhat from the language of Portugal. Certainly Brazilian titles tend to be less fanciful than Portuguese ones. **Persuasion** in Brazil is **Persuasao**; in Portugal the novel is called **Sangue Azul** (Blue Blood). How admirably the title suits the story of the gentleman who "never took up any book but the *Baronetage*!"

Jane Austen and Her Readers

Address given at the Annual General Meeting
by Mr. B. C. Southam

I

Lord David Cecil has given you the title of my talk. But I would like to add a somewhat lighter and more allusive sub-title—"Joints of Mutton and Doses of Rhubarb." Readers of Jane Austen's letters will recognise these joints of mutton and doses of rhubarb. They are mentioned in a letter to Cassandra in which Jane Austen is complaining about the impossibility of writing while her head was filled with the business of house-keeping. But this complaint, like many of Jane Austen's complaints, is a joke. Despite domestic distractions, Jane Austen did write. The letter to Cassandra is dated 8th September, 1816, just four weeks after she had completed **Persuasion**, which had itself been written in almost exactly a year. When we review her life as an author, alongside her life with the family—with the demands, first of her parents, then her widowed mother, then a succession of nephews and nieces, whom she was expected to entertain and advise—we can judge that she was an author who pursued her creative work with energy and determination.

The impression we get from Jane Austen's letters and from the family memoirs is rather different. Her writing is there represented as something of a spare-time occupation, an escape from the household chores or the clamour of the children, when she would pick up her latest manuscript and jot down a page or two in a peaceful corner. We get the impression of an inspired amateur, a kind of Sunday writer, avoiding literary society and literary gossip, who wrote to please herself and her friends, not for fame or fortune. This is a touching and attractive picture. It appeals to our sense of art as a matter solely of genius and intuition, to our idea of the artist as a free and joyful spirit. It is an impression that Jane Austen would want us to have. The style and performance of the novels are characterised by a deceptive modesty and easy grace; and when in her letters Jane Austen mentions her books, it is often in tones of self-deprecating irony.

Yet the facts of her writing career (a period of over thirty years), the six completed novels with their early history of revision and rewriting, and the mass of other manuscript material, tell us of an author to whom writing was not just a hobby or a relaxation, but a matter of life itself. Jane Austen had her children. She writes of them in her letters. Of **Sense and Sensibility** she told Cassandra. "I can no more forget it, than a mother can forget

her sucking child"; in another letter she described **Pride and Prejudice** as her "darling child."

Perhaps the most important single event in Jane Austen's writing life was the publication of her first novel, **Sense and Sensibility** in 1811. This was her first real claim to authorship, a visible proof that the years of writing and re-writing had not been for nothing. For the first time her work was exposed to an audience of strangers, and was to be judged by people who knew and cared nothing about her. This was very different from her childhood and the years that followed, for she had then enjoyed the luxury of a private audience in her family and friends, the close circle for which her earliest stories were written. The immediate family audience had played a vital part in her early artistic development. These were people upon whom she could count for encouragement and appreciation. They also provided standards, for the Austens were quick-witted and widely read. They were a family with literary taste and talent. Her brothers Henry and James had together written and edited an Oxford periodical, **The Loiterer**, during their student days; and it may well be that Jane Austen herself contributed ideas and material to this magazine when she was a child of only eleven or twelve.

But family admiration is no test. Jane Austen wanted to be read and judged without favour, and I am sure that it was this ambition, as much as the sheer joy of writing, that sustained her over the period of about 17 or 18 years when she was without the satisfaction of seeing anything of her work in print.

Before the publication of **Sense and Sensibility** there had been two disappointments. In 1796, her father had offered to a publisher an early version of **Pride and Prejudice**, but without success; and in 1803 the publisher Crosby had actually bought "Susan", an early version of **Northanger Abbey**, which was advertised but never published. There followed a period of inactivity, during which Jane Austen did nothing more than make a start on "The Watsons", a novel she never finished. But with the publication of **Sense and Sensibility**, Jane Austen entered upon the most creative phase of her life, a period of only six years during which she re-wrote **Pride and Prejudice** and **Northanger Abbey** and composed the three masterpieces—**Mansfield Park**, **Emma** and **Persuasion**.

This timetable of composition draws our attention to the last phase of her life, when she had no longer to regard herself as one of a numberless host of unknown scribblers. As a published author, her writing was read beyond the family, by a wide and impartial audience. The sense that her powers were being put out to a public test seems to have stimulated her as never before.

II

Sense and Sensibility appeared in November, 1811, in three volumes, price 15/-. It was advertised as an "Interesting Novel". There was a brisk sale and a second edition followed in 1813, probably making a total of two or three thousand copies. To us these may sound small numbers. But most of these copies went to the circulating libraries, not to individual purchasers, and we can guess that the novel had as many as nine or ten thousand readers.

There were two reviews, one in the **Critical Review**, the other in the **British Critic**. Both reviewers told their readers that **Sense and Sensibility** was a work of distinction, altogether superior to the average run of fiction. The **Critical** reviewer found it "well written," "just long enough to interest without fatiguing". He approved of the fact that the characters were taken from "genteel life"; he liked the mixture of humour and good sense; and he went on to give an outline of the characters and plot. The review in the **British Critic** went along the same lines: the reviewer admired the characterisation and the combination of sound moral instruction with entertainment. His criticisms were, as he said, "trifling": he found Sir John Dashwood "rather overcharged" and he warned his readers that there was a bewildering tribe of "half-sisters, cousins, and so forth".

This may seem a remarkably cool reception. One would think that the novel's qualities are unmistakable. Yet Jane Austen herself could not have been confident that it would be well received. In the first place, the fact of its publication signified rather less than we might suppose. This was not a case in which Jane Austen had the reassurance of an enthusiastic publisher, for **Sense and Sensibility** was published at her own expense. There were other grounds for anxiety on her part, other reasons why it was not certain that her genius would be appreciated. Literary criticism was then at a very low ebb, and public taste was uneducated. The novel itself, as a literary form, was in disfavour, since fiction-writing had degenerated into little more than a hack industry. The circulating libraries kept up a constant demand for sentimental romances and gothic thrillers—what Jane Austen described as "trash"; and it was trash which flooded the market. Thus most critics and reviewers tended to regard the novel as a disreputable branch of writing, hardly literature at all, not a form in which one would expect to find works of genius.

Beyond this, Jane Austen had good reason to be anxious about her own writing in particular, for its subject-matter of ordinary middle-class life, treated realistically, ran counter to what was then fashionable. Love, as she portrayed it, was

a relationship involving tensions and disagreements as well as harmony and joy. Jane Austen was ready to show marriage as an arrangement—involving such worldly considerations as settlements, dowries, incomes and in-laws. This kind of straightforward realism was largely unknown to the fiction of the period. People did not go to novels to read about themselves and the realities of their own lives. They expected, instead, to find a higher, more exalted reality. They could read of villains and suffering; and there might be familiar scenes, say of London life, as we find in *Fanny Burney*. But it was a world where issues were simplified; where the passions were pure and strong; where love was love-at-first-sight; where the lovers themselves were heroic in their passions and deeds; where there was mystery and romance and melodrama; where love and beauty and nobility are always seen to triumph over villainy and circumstances.

The novels of Jane Austen are an attack upon this kind of romantic unreality and unworldliness. In *Northanger Abbey*, gothic melodrama is ridiculed; in *Sense and Sensibility*, the novel of sensibility is under fire; and *Pride and Prejudice*, too, is a critique of sentimental love. Instead of a swooning, impressionable heroine, there is in Elizabeth Bennett a witty young woman of energy and sense. Instead of the doting hero, there is the unbending Darcy. Instead of love-at-first-sight there is antipathy-at-first-sight. Instead of the enchantment of instant affection there is another kind of delusive force, in the pride and prejudice which cloud the judgement of Darcy and Elizabeth. The fascination they exert over one-another is initially that of personality and character; love comes later. To begin with, each recognises the other to be a challenge. For the first time, each has discovered somebody worth arguing with, worth the exercise of attention and wit. And yet, as they are to learn, at some cost to their self-conceit, their powers of mind and judgement are not always a certain way to the truth, especially the truth about other people. In the contest between Darcy and Elizabeth, we are reminded of Beatrice and Benedict in *Much Ado About Nothing*. I mention this parallel not simply because of the obvious similarities between these two argumentative couples. We are reminded of Shakespeare at a deeper level, because Jane Austen's presentation of character is so strikingly dramatic, and reveals such a remarkable force of sympathy and perception.

Later in the century, in the 1840's and 50's, critics such as Macaulay and Lewes were to speak of Jane Austen in the same breath as Shakespeare, paying homage to her powers of characterisation. But her contemporary readers and reviewers were not prepared to discover such genius in a mere novelist, and while they enjoyed her books for their humour and good sense, and admired the character-drawing, they had not the least inclination to value this achievement in what we would call literary terms.

nor were they ready to understand the more subtle and profound aspects of her ironic vision.

A single exception must be made. One reviewer did in fact, grasp the nature of Jane Austen's achievement. This reviewer was Sir Walter Scott, who wrote about *Emma* in the *Quarterly Review* for March, 1816. In this novel, he declared, the nineteenth-century possessed a new kind of fiction, what he called "the modern novel", through which runs "the current of ordinary life". He drew attention to the fact that behind this realism, seemingly so undemanding, lay a remarkable artistic achievement. He knew very well, as a practising novelist, that to represent familiar life, convincingly, truthfully and engagingly is a feat of great art; and in attempting this himself, he later ran into exactly the same opposition as Jane Austen encountered. This arose over his portrayal of Diana Vernon in *Rob Roy*. (We should remember Scott's description of Diana Vernon as "a common sort of married body"). In 1819, Lady Frances Shelley wrote to him in protest :

It is no argument to say that all this is in accordance with human nature. A novel, like poetry, should have for its hero a person superior to the common herd of men—one who evinces a higher tone of feeling. The same objection may be made to all Jane Austen's novels, and also to most of Crabbe's poetry. Surely works of imagination should raise us above our everyday feelings, and excite in us those *elan passageres* of virtue and sensibility which are exquisite and ennobling, and which . . . would exalt our poor humanity in the scale of being.

In this letter, Lady Shelley was asking for a literature that would improve and inspire. In the same breath she was denying that there could be a literature of human nature, of Diana Vernons, and by implication, of Emmas, Mr. Woodhouses and Misses Bates. This is the argument we encounter again and again in the nineteenth-century: the contention that Jane Austen could not be anything more than an ordinary, everyday writer since she wrote about ordinary, everyday people.

Our answer to the first point might be that writing which is meant to be moralistic and inspirational, ends all too often, not by inspiring the reader, but by putting him to sleep. Jane Austen's method, that of the novelist, is to work dramatically: the values and principles are there, not declared flatly, but embodied in the characters and action. That Jane Austen was, in truth, concerned with values and principles was hardly glimpsed.

I have given some attention to the reaction against Jane Austen in order to indicate the way in which her writing was



*Sir Walter Scott (1771-1832) from the portrait by Sir Edwin Landseer, R.A.
(National Portrait Gallery)*

above the heads of her readers or in which it was unfashionable, and unlikely to please her contemporary audience. In this light both **Sense and Sensibility** and **Pride and Prejudice** were remarkably well received. **Pride and Prejudice**, published in 1813, was welcomed as a worthy successor to **Sense and Sensibility** and went to a second edition in the same year. In 1814 **Mansfield Park** was published. Curiously, this novel was not reviewed at all. Both the **British Critic** and the **Critical Review** had mentioned the two earlier novels and they might well have been expected to notice the third. But perhaps the editors were doubtful of the book's appeal. Its seriousness of tone and the absence of a strong love-story may have persuaded them that it was off the mark and unlikely to appeal to the average woman reader. Certainly, **Mansfield Park** provided a marked contrast to the brilliance and speed of **Pride and Prejudice**.

Different again was **Emma** published in December, 1815. This was a novel to attract attention—with its high-spirited story of match-making crossed by comic intrigue and misunderstanding. The reviewers welcomed **Emma** as light relief. The **British Critic** found it "amusing, inoffensive, and well principled", a refreshing change from "fanatical" books by "fanatical authoresses". The **Monthly Review** recommended **Emma** for its simple "ingredient", "a strain of genuine natural humour" which provided "harmless amusement". The **Gentleman's Magazine** also liked **Emma**, but ended rather patronisingly that it was "Amusing, if not instructive".

Jane Austen's last two novels, **Northanger Abbey** and **Persuasion**, were published together in December, 1817. Some of the reviewers' comments are quite surprising. One preferred **Northanger Abbey** to **Persuasion**, partly on account of its plot, partly on account of its "moral tendency"; another critic warned his readers against the moral of **Persuasion**, which he found to be revolutionary—to quote his very words, "that young people should always marry according to their own inclinations and upon their own judgement", an interpretation Jane Austen would have been amused by.

In addition to the published reviews, there was also a wide range of private comment and discussion. Jane Austen's novels were widely read in very different circles, in the intellectual society of Edinburgh, culturally and geographically far removed from the court of the Prince Regent, where the novels were favourite reading. Opinions, too, could be equally far apart. At one extreme we have a Mrs. Bramstone, who considered **Sense and Sensibility** to be "downright nonsense"; whereas Richard Brinsley Sheridan thought **Pride and Prejudice** "one of the cleverest things he ever read". Warren Hastings liked it too, especially the character of Elizabeth Bennet, an item of praise that Jane Austen heard through her brother Henry and found "particularly

welcome". According to Lady Byron, **Pride and Prejudice** was "the fashionable novel" of the time. It also had admirers in such readers as William Gifford, the editor of the **Quarterly Review**, the novelist Mary Russel Mitford, and the literary commentator Henry Crabb Robinson, who noted in his diary that he was so gripped by the novel that in order to finish it he stayed up until two in the morning for two nights running. He particularly enjoyed the portrait of Mr. Collins, "the sneaking... servile parson".

Jane Austen was interested in what people had to say about her work. In the case of **Mansfield Park** and **Emma** she took the trouble to compile two collections of comments and remarks which she called "Opinions of **Mansfield Park**", "Opinions of **Emma**", some of which she actually heard, some of which were passed on to her by members of the family. Clearly Jane Austen gained some satisfaction in keeping these records; and she must also have been amused to write down the comments of people like Mrs. Bramstone, who "expected to like **Mansfield Park** better" than the earlier novels, "and having finished the 1st vol.—flattered herself she had got through the worst". Mrs. Lefroy liked **Mansfield Park**, but thought it "a mere Novel". Cassandra found it "quite as clever, tho' not so brilliant as **P. & P.** Fond of Fanny. Delighted much in Mr. Rushworth's stupidity." Her mother "thought Fanny insipid".

Altogether there are 38 entries for **Mansfield Park**, some a few words only, some a paragraph long. Overall, they provide evidence of the way in which Jane Austen's readers became involved with the drama of character and action: they were sharply divided on questions of innocence and guilt—on whether or not Henry Crawford's elopement with Mrs. Rushworth was natural—on whether Edmund would have been likely to become attached to so unprincipled a woman as Mary Crawford. For these readers, **Mansfield Park** was a novel which faced them with real issues, with situations and characters which exercised their sympathy, amusement and judgement.

There is the same interest for us in the "Opinions of **Emma**". The Perrot family thought that Emma enjoyed "much better luck than a Matchmaker often has". Miss Bigg felt that there was too much "Match-making". Mrs. Digweed "did not like it so well as the others, in fact if she had not known the Author, could hardly have got through it". Some of the remarks are sheer nonsense. Jane Austen was playing a game when she set them down alongside comments which are perceptive and thought-provoking. Yet at the same time, she was genuinely concerned for what other people thought of her writing. We know from the **Memoir** of her anxiety that Elinor Dashwood should be seen as an appealing character; and we can read more to this effect in her letters to Cassandra—where she hopes that Elinor Dash-

wood will be liked by her sister-in-law, Edward's wife, Elizabeth; that Elizabeth Bennet should be found delightful; that Darcy should be appreciated; that (perhaps to our surprise) Henry Crawford should be admired, "I mean properly, as a clever pleasant man". We can also read of her fears: that **Emma** would be judged "inferior in good sense" to **Mansfield Park**; that Emma would be a heroine "whom no-one but myself will like"; that Anne Elliot might be too perfect a heroine.

In all this we can glimpse Jane Austen's concern that her work should be appreciated, and a further concern for what people actually said about the novels. But there is no evidence that she ever allowed herself to be influenced, either by criticism or praise. The only hint of something that might be a concession to public taste is a change to the second edition of **Sense and Sensibility**. The alteration was made in chapter 13, where Mrs. Jennings is scandal-mongering about Colonel Brandon. She whispers to Elinor Dashwood that Brandon has an illegitimate daughter. In the first edition, we are told that Lady Middleton overhears the remark; her "delicacy was shocked; and in order to banish so improper a subject as the mention of a natural daughter, she actually took the trouble of saying something herself about the weather". These lines were omitted from the second edition. Perhaps this is a passage that survives from the original version of **Sense and Sensibility**, written almost 20 years earlier, and then meant for the closer, family audience. Possibly Jane Austen felt that a joke of this kind might carry some slight offence for a reading-public that was not familiar with the broad and racy humour of Fielding, Smollett and other eighteenth-century writers. But this is pure speculation. We have no firm evidence that in making this change Jane Austen was the slightest bit worried about the sensibilities of her contemporary readers. She may have been more concerned, as a novelist, whether or not the joke was heavy-handed or in character for Lady Middleton.

Jane Austen's cast of mind is distinguished by strength, by power of judgement and discrimination; and we cannot suppose that a genius of this nature would be unduly open to influence from outside. This is perfectly illustrated in her dealings with the Rev. James Stanier Clarke, the Librarian to the Prince Regent. Clarke was a stupidly ambitious man who imagined that he could make use of Jane Austen to further his own career and to win himself a memorial in literature. First of all, he tried to persuade her to write a novel about a literary clergyman—in fact, a portrait of himself—and he offered to supply details from his own experiences as a naval chaplain and at court. Just after this, early in 1816, Clarke was appointed Chaplain to the Prince of Coburg. He promptly suggested that Jane Austen should dedicate her next work to the Prince; and, more than that, that

she should try her hand at a historical novel about his own master's family, the House of Coburg. Jane Austen's well-known answer was a quiet but unmistakable snub: she would not, she told him, write at his suggestion the life of a literary clergyman nor a historical romance. "No," she concluded, "I must keep to my own style and go on in my own way; and though I may never succeed in that, I am convinced that I should totally fail in any other".

To say that Jane Austen was a determined and independent novelist is not, of course, to suggest that she wrote in isolation or wilfully indifferent to an audience. We know otherwise. From the very beginning there was an audience in her family and closest friends. In time, this audience dispersed. But Jane Austen kept up the practice of reading her stories aloud. This is how the family first knew of the work that was eventually published as *Sense and Sensibility*, this is how Cassandra was first acquainted with *Pride and Prejudice*; and we can suppose that the other novels were heard in the same way.

What measurable effect this had on the novels it is difficult to judge, although we might guess that the sharpness of her dialogue was partly shaped by the test of being read aloud. In a more general way, however, we can suppose that certain characteristics of the family audience were answered in Jane Austen's writing. The Austens made a witty and sophisticated audience, widely-read, delighting in jokes about their friends and neighbours; at the same time they were religious and high-principled without being over-pious or moralistic. It was an audience used to the manners and customs of the middle-class gentry of the villages and country towns of the Home Counties. This was the world that Jane Austen and her audience knew: it was the world that she chose to portray.

III

I have tried to distinguish between the two different kinds of reader that Jane Austen knew in her own life-time: first, the ordinary reader, who would pick up a novel at the circulating library, and who might be slightly surprised, even perhaps disconcerted at the realism, the truth-to-ordinary life that he would find in her books. The second reader is the reader known to Jane Austen, the relation or friend whose interests and tastes were close to her own, who could be counted upon to laugh at folly and stupidity, to recognise the characters of truth and virtue, and to acknowledge that the good and the bad, the true and the false, are not always clearly distinguishable and that human beings and their behaviour can command amusement as well as sympathy.

I believe that Jane Austen's sense of this close and responsive reader contributed a particular quality to her writing: an intimacy of tone and address which somehow involves us with the author herself. It is as if we are invited to stand alongside her in regarding the characters and world of the novels; not necessarily to join with her in judging, condemning or praising; but certainly to share her interests in their lives and experiences, something which is neatly defined for us in an exchange between Darcy and Elizabeth Bennet. Elizabeth has just explained to Bingley that as a studier of character she finds "intricate characters the most amusing". Darcy breaks into the conversation: "The country . . . can in general supply but a few subjects for such a study. In a country neighbourhood you move in a very confined and unvarying society". Elizabeth answers him: "But people themselves alter so much that there is something new to be observed in them for-ever". Elizabeth's delight in the ordinary processes of character and personality in ordinary people is certainly a delight shared by Jane Austen. It is a delight that the reader is in turn invited to share.

Sometimes the invitation is direct and explicit. Jane Austen occasionally refers to herself within the novels as a narrator, as a kind of historian, and she may ask us to fill in details from our own experience of the world—to imagine what the lovers said to one-another, to judge for ourselves what happened to the characters beyond the point at which her telling of the story ends.

These elements of intimacy in Jane Austen's tone and address have been defined by other critics. Miss Mary Lascelles has written of what she has termed the novelist's "mood of hospitality". Sir Walter Raleigh spoke of "a certain subtle literary politeness that is charm itself". Katherine Mansfield declared "that every true admirer of the novels cherishes the happy thought that he alone—reading between the lines—has become the secret friend of their author".

Hospitality, charm, intimacy, friendship—these are the terms we use when we try to describe this elusive quality in Jane Austen's writing. Much more needs to be said; that it is a quality compounded of irony, that it is an instrument of Jane Austen's critical vision. But these are matters for another time. My purpose, for this occasion has simply been to consider, speculatively, what kind of influence Jane Austen's readers may have exerted on the novelist's art.

T. Edward Carpenter, B.A., LL.B., J.P.

As this Report was about to go to press, we heard with much regret of the death on 5th March, 1969, of Mr. T. Edward Carpenter, a Vice-President of the Society and Chairman of the Jane Austen Memorial Trust.

A full appreciation will appear in the next Annual Report.

THE JANE AUSTEN SOCIETY

Report for the Year, 1969



Cassandra Austen, by John Miers (1756-1821)

*The silhouette overleaf is reproduced by permission of Mrs. Peggy
Hickman, author of "Silhouettes" (Cassell's Collectors Pieces '68)*

THE JANE AUSTEN SOCIETY

(Founded in 1940 by Dorothy G. Darnell)

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Miss Elizabeth Jenkins

Sir Hugh Smiley, Bt.

THE JANE AUSTEN SOCIETY

Report for the year 1969

Membership

One hundred and ten new members joined the Society during the year. Of these, eleven live in the U.S.A., four in Canada, one in Australia and three in New Zealand. Twenty eight new members became Life Members, as did eleven old members.

We have also heard with great interest of the formation of a Jane Austen Society of Tiruchirapalli, South India, whose Hon. Secretary is Mr. L. C. Richard, M.A.

Members are reminded that subscriptions are due on 1st January, and that this Report is the only reminder that they will receive. The Hon. Secretary would much appreciate prompt payment of the 5/- Annual Subscription, and will gladly provide a Banker's Order Form.

Annual General Meeting

The Annual Meeting was held at Chawton House, by kind permission of Major and Mrs. Edward Knight, on Saturday, 19th July, when nearly 500 members and their friends were present. Lord David Cecil presided.

Opening the meeting the President referred to the deaths of Mr. T. Edward Carpenter, a Vice-President since 1947, and Chairman of the Jane Austen Memorial Trust, and of Lt.-Col. Sir William Makins, Bt., Chairman of the Society since 1963. The President told the meeting that Miss Elizabeth Jenkins and Sir Hugh Smiley, Bt., had accepted invitations to become Trustees of the Jane Austen Memorial Trust. The minutes of the last Annual Meeting, having been printed in the Annual Report, were taken as read,

The Hon. Secretary presented the Report for 1968. This was seconded by Mrs. J. M. Lane, and carried.

The Hon. Treasurer presented the Accounts for 1968. Their adoption was proposed by Mr. F. F. P. Gill, seconded by Mr. C. Y. Carstairs, and carried.

Sir Hugh Smiley proposed the re-election of Lord David Cecil as President, and of the Duke of Wellington and Mr. John Gore as Vice-Presidents. This was seconded by Mr. Thomas Carpenter, and carried.

Lord Manners proposed, and His Honour Judge G. E. Leslie seconded the election of Sir Hugh Smiley as Chairman of the Society. This was carried.

The President proposed that Mr. B. C. Southam be elected to the Committee, and that the remainder be re-elected en bloc. He also said that Miss Beatrix Darnell had felt obliged, on account of old age (she was 96) and deafness, to resign from the Committee, of which she had been a member since the formation of the Society. Some flowers had been sent to her on the morning of the meeting, and she had asked that a message of love and thanks should be sent to those present at the meeting.

The meeting was addressed by Miss Elizabeth Bowen, C.B.E., LL.D., who took 'Charm' as her subject.

A vote of thanks was proposed by Sir James Paterson Ross, Bt., K.C.V.O., seconded by Mrs. J. Gray, and carried.

The President closed the meeting by thanking Major and Mrs. Edward Knight for once again lending Chawton House for the meeting.



Annual General Meeting, 1970

The Annual General Meeting will be held at Chawton House, by kind permission of Major and Mrs. Edward Knight, at 3 p.m. on Saturday, 18th July. The meeting will be addressed by Miss Rachel Trickett, Fellow and Tutor in English at St. Hugh's College, Oxford.



T. Edward Carpenter, B.A., LL.B., J.P.

The Jane Austen Society has to record with great regret the death, in 1969, of its benefactor T. Edward Carpenter, who in response to its appeal, bought Chawton Cottage in 1947. Mr. Carpenter, as members will know, made the house available to the public in memory of his son Lieutenant John Philip Carpenter, killed on active service in 1944.

From the time of his vesting the property in the Jane Austen Memorial Trust, Mr. Carpenter made its upkeep, improvement and enrichment, his life's work. He not only took vigilant and expert care of the fabric, securing vacant possession of it by buying alternative accommodation for a protected tenant; he also made contact with as many members and connections of the Austen family as he could, finding out by this means what personal relics of Jane Austen were in existence. When any such relics were offered for sale, by auction or privately, Mr. Carpenter bought with discrimination and generosity. It is largely owing to him that the house contains a collection such as we had thought could never be got

together ; for Jane Austen's possessions, unlike those of the Brontë's, had been scattered after the death of her sister Cassandra in 1845.

In all this work, Mr. Carpenter was supported by his wife, who had been the favourite niece of Kate Greenaway, and who died in 1967. Without being academic, Mr. and Mrs. Carpenter had the intense love for Jane Austen's work and the sound knowledge of the domestic life of her period which fitted them to create a living memorial to her for the general public. The Society and all Jane Austen's admirers will remember them with the warmest gratitude.



Lt.-Colonel Sir William Makins, Bt., J.P., D.L.

Sir William Makins joined the Committee of the Society in 1958, and became Chairman on the resignation of Mr. John Gore in 1963.

Sir William's commitments in Hampshire included membership of the County Council, of which he became an Alderman, and the Chairmanship of both the Diocesan Board of Finance and of the County Probation Committee. Yet he found time to attend most of the quarterly committee meetings of the Society, although occasionally he could not resist an invitation to shoot or fish.

It was Sir William who in 1960 suggested a Jane Austen Essay Competition, which would be open to students at schools in Hampshire, and which finally took place in 1963. He also put forward the idea that streets in the new parts of Basingstoke might be named after characters and places from Jane Austen's novels, to which an encouraging reply was received from the Town Council.

Ill health, including three major operations, did not lessen his enthusiasm, although it caused much concern to his friends. He became ill soon after Christmas in 1968, and died in April, 1969. The enormous congregation at his Memorial Service in Winchester Cathedral, at which this Society was represented, showed by how many he would be missed.



Beatrix Darnell

Beatrix Darnell was a member of the original committee of the Jane Austen Society, founded by her sister Dorothy. She was our first Treasurer ; she gave the post up, later, saying it was not right that it should be filled by someone so closely connected with the Founder. She continued, however, to be of very great help to us.

amateurs as we were, because she had been for many years secretary of the Royal College of Music, and had gained experience the rest of us were without.

She contributed as much by her character as by her professional advice. Kind and warm-hearted, she was full of salty common-sense and could always see the humour of any situation. She was so high-spirited and independent, it was not surprising to hear that as a school-girl she had been a tomboy; her sister told me once of how Beatrix, in an ankle length skirt, climbed an extremely high wall and crawled along the coping while the rest of them gazed upwards in terror.

She missed her sister Dorothy most keenly but bore the loss with characteristic courage. She never lost her interest in the doings of the Society, and we used to have our Committee meetings in her house until last year, when she felt herself too deaf and infirm to hear and understand. Dorothy Darnell said, on the afternoon when we first discussed forming a committee: "I must have Beatrix, because I couldn't get on without her," and one feels that those words are her best epitaph.

Elizabeth Jenkins.

Count Rumford's Stove

Catherine Morland was disappointed to find, among other modernizations at Northanger Abbey, that the fireplace in the smaller dressing room had been "contracted to a Rumford."

This was the invention of the American-born Sir Benjamin Thompson, (1753-1814), created Count von Rumford (his American wife's birthplace) for his services to the Elector of Bavaria.

The Count was a man of extraordinary practical genius, his chief interest being improvements in methods of cooking and domestic heating. A side issue was his remedy for smoking chimneys, of which he had cured five hundred, beginning with one of Lord Palmerston's in Hanover Square.

In 1799 he achieved his life's work, the founding of the Royal Institution in Albermarle Street. The aims of the Institution were: "The diffusion of knowledge of new improvements" and "teaching the application of science to the useful purposes of life." It contained a lecture theatre and an exhibition where inventions were on view. The original Proposals say that among other objects in this exhibition will be "ornamental stoves in the form of elegant chimney pieces." Rumford's own stove, a slow-combustion one, was made of cast-iron; this when subjected to intense heat, gave off a harsh smell, so he recommended that it should be en-



Miss A. Beatrix Darnell (1873-1970)

cased in pottery-ware, which could be beautified with paint or gilding ; since there would be people enough to advise about that, he said he would not deal with the matter.

The photograph shows one of Rumford's stoves originally on the premises of the Royal Institution, covered in pottery with a design of dark flowers on a pale ground.

Rumford also invented a portable oven known as Rumford's Roaster in which many dishes could be kept hot at once. One wonders if General Tilney had adopted one of these also, in the Northanger kitchens "rich in the massy walls and smoke of other days, and the stoves and hot closets of the present."

"Northanger Abbey," according to Jane Austen herself was finished in 1803 and not afterwards retouched. It is difficult to find out when Count Rumford's stove was put on the market, but considering his years abroad before 1799, it seems unlikely that this was before 1800, and if so, General Tilney was modern indeed in his improvements.

Catherine Morland "cared for no furniture of a more modern date than the fifteenth century" but we are just as eager to see the furniture of her own day. The photograph, reproduced by kind permission of the Royal Institution, helps to create the visual image of the fireplace in "the common drawing room"—"contracted to a Rumford with slabs of plain though handsome marble, and ornaments over it of the prettiest English china."

Elizabeth Jenkins

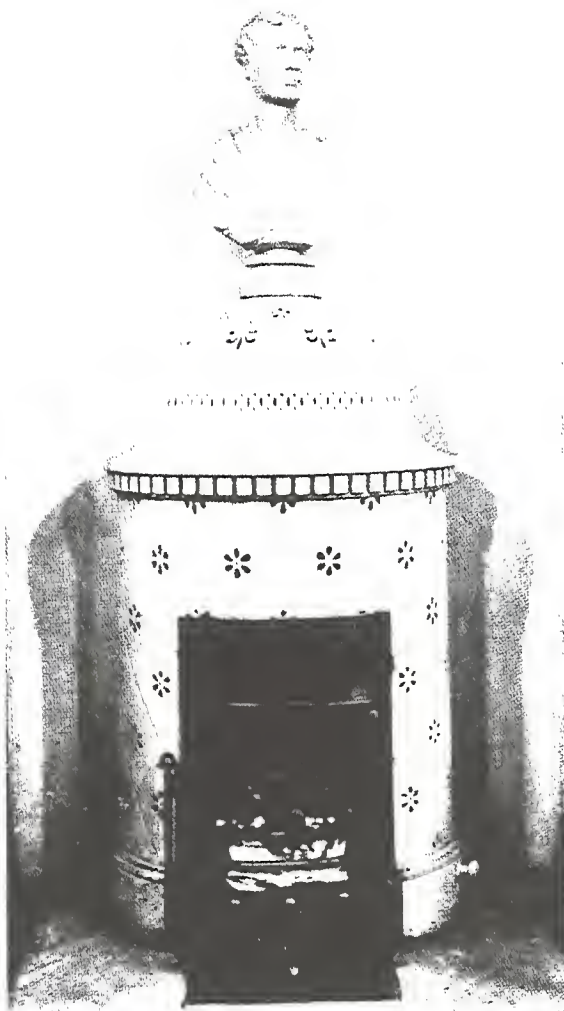


A Lawrence Whistler Decanter

In 1953 the late Mr. Robert Tritton commissioned Mr. Lawrence Whistler to engrave a pair of decanters with views of his house, Godmersham Park in Kent. We reproduce a photograph of the Georgian decanter showing the entrance front of the red brick house, which was built in 1732.

Godmersham Park was inherited by Jane Austen's brother Edward from his cousin Thomas Knight in 1794, together with the Chawton Estate in Hampshire, and changed his name to Knight in 1802.

Writing to her sister Cassandra from Godmersham on 15th June, 1808, Jane Austen says ". . . so off we drove, drove, drove, and by six-o'clock were at Godmersham. Our two brothers were walking before the house as we approached, as natural as life. Fanny and Lizzie met us in the Hall with a great deal of pleasant joy ; we went for a few minutes into the breakfast parlour, and then



*The Rumford stove which stood, until about 1928, in the Manager's Room
at the Royal Institution, by whose permission
the photograph is reproduced*

proceeded to our rooms. Mary has the Hall chamber, I am in the Yellow room—very literally—for I am writing in it at the moment. It seems odd to me to have such a great place all to my self . . .”

We are indebted to Mrs. Robert Tritton, Mr. Lawrence Whistler and Messrs. Rupert Hart-Davis for permission to reproduce this photograph.

“A room of one’s own”

Miss Elizabeth Jenkins, by her exhaustive research into every available source of information on Jane Austen’s life, gave us perhaps the most complete and most widely read biography of the many which have been written about that great novelist and her family.

There is one small detail of which she reminds us in the Steven-ton period which gives me particular food for thought. She records that, leading out the bedroom which she shared with Cassandra, was a small dressing closet and that in it Jane Austen some-times got the privacy and peace to compose her earliest essays in literature. Here perhaps **First Impressions** was in part written.

But if we are to take as substantially true the manner of life at Chawton Cottage between 1809 and 1817, as it is described with fair unanimity by most of her biographers, she wrote or revised four of her great novels with none of the advantages that the world’s novelists, great and small, seem to have enjoyed and to have regarded as essential—quiet incubation of their ideas and continuous and undisturbed sessions of composition.

It has been widely accepted that at Chawton she had not even a writing table to call her own, that she wrote in the common sitting room, on a small writing desk, often interrupted by callers and by household chores, her ears trained on the creak of the door; anonymity still an object, even if less essential than formerly. It occurred to me suddenly to wonder if that extraordinary fact is fact, or legend.

In a letter to Cassandra of September 8th, 1816, she herself appears to deny the fact :—

“Composition (she wrote) seems to me impossible with a head full of joints of mutton and doses of rhubarb.” It is possible that occasional observations by her family and visitors of Jane Austen at work in such conditions became a legend of her **invariable** practice.

If so, it becomes necessary to consider what opportunities for quiet composition, the Cottage afforded. For, considering the astonishing output of those years at Chawton, it suddenly emerges



as a miracle—a unique achievement—that those four great novels were planned, written or revised under such a handicap. Not for her the undisturbed early mornings at Abbotsford, the measured rations turned out by Trollope before his official work began, the quiet of Ebury Street with its opportunities for meticulous choice of a phrase. At Chawton, no one called: “Hush, Jane is composing”; she was at beck and call of family and visitors. Can we accept the miracle that she, alone among novelists, carried all her skills within her, improving them in her mind as the day’s trivial chores were carried out, her inspiration insulated from mundane matters and bridging constant checks and interruptions? Or did she perhaps plan and memorise the coming days stint in the privacy of her bedroom and accurately reproduce it under conditions so unfavourable? Either way, she was and is incomparable indeed!

What, then, was available to her in Chawton Cottage for privacy and peace? The small bedroom which Miss Stevens, the former tenant, identified as Jane Austen’s, has since been accepted as such without certain proof. It is very small, as indeed are the others. There is rather equivocal evidence that the bedroom which Jane used, contained two beds. In a letter to Cassandra* she writes (in absence) in reference to a visit by Charles’ small Cassy,

“I hope Cassy hasn’t filled my bed with fleas.”

She does not say “our” or “the” bed, as Miss Jenkins pointed out to me. “Jane Austen’s bedroom” can hardly have contained a writing table as well!

We have absolutely no certain evidence of the bedroom she used or of the use to which she put any other room on either floor for her literary work. Without such evidence, the legend that all her work on those great novels was done in the living room, under conditions which a reporter of village fêtes on a provincial newspaper may perhaps grow used to, stands out (late in the day for me) as an inexplicable mystery, a miracle, a **credo quia impossibile**.

How little, after all, is it that we know about her and the way of life at Chawton Cottage! Biographies of Shakespeare are built up on about a dozen pieces of acceptable documentary evidence. The rest is surmise, hearsay and legend. Of Jane Austen’s life there is a deal of acceptable evidence, chiefly from her letters. Yet it may be that legend and hearsay have co-operated with facts in building up our present estimate of her genius.

John Gore.

*March 2nd, 1814.

1919

Handwritten notes:
 1919
 1919
 1919

Probate
of the will and Codicil of
Cassandra Elizabeth Austen
Spinster deceased
Dated First April 1845.

Extracted by W. & A. C. Nicholls
London & Boston (Amers.)

This document is owned by Mrs. Rosemary Mowl, great-grand-daughter of Admiral of the Fleet Sir Francis Austen, G.C.B., through his son the Revd. Edward Austen, and through his daughter, Mrs. Mary Jane Spanton, Mrs. Mowl's mother.

Cassandra Austen was staying with her brother the Admiral, who had bought Portsdown Lodge in about 1840, and where he spent the rest of his life, when she signed the Codicil. The house was demolished after the last war, during which it was requisitioned as Headquarters of Portsmouth Garrison.

A transcription of the Will and Codicil follows:—

I Cassandra Elizabeth Austen of the Parish of Chawton in the County of Southampton Spinster so make and publish this my last Will and Testament to which I appoint my brother Edw'd Knight of Godmersham Park in the county of Kent EXECUTOR I give and bequeath to my said brother Edw'd Knight one thousand pounds stock in the three per cent Ro..... standing in my name I give and bequeath my brother Henry Thomas Austen one thousand pounds stock in the three per cent Ro..... standing in my name I give and bequeath to my brother Francis William Austen one thousand pounds stock in the three per cent Ro..... standing in my name I give and bequeath to my niece Jane Anna Elizabeth Lefroy one thousand pounds stock in the three per cent Ro..... standing in my name I give and bequeath to Caroline Elizabeth Fowle daughter of the late Rev'd Fulwar Craven Fowle of Kintbury Berkshire one thousand pounds sterling and as to the money secured on land in the Parish of Higham in the County of Leicester belonging to the vicarage of Gubington in Warwickshire which was given to me and my late sister by the late Mrs. Elizabeth Leigh and which said money produces an annual interest of six pounds eight shillings I give the same to my Niece and God-daughter Cassandra Esten Austen daughter of my brother Charles John Austen and I give and bequeath the remainder of whatever I may have a right to dispose of after my just debts and funeral expenses have been paid to my said brother Charles John Austen upon condition that he pays twenty pounds a year

Cassandra

of the Parish of St. Andrew, in the County of Southampton, sheweth
 & appeareth, my brother **Colw. Knight** of Southampton Esq^r
 my late brother **Geo. Knight** one thousand pounds sterl in the ten
 my brother **Thomas Knight** one thousand pounds sterl in the ten
 my brother **Thomas William Knight** one thousand pounds sterl in the ten
 my more than Anna Elizabetha Esq^r one thousand pounds sterl in
 to **Thomas Knight** one thousand pounds sterl in the late Lord **Viscount** **St. John**
 And as to the money due on lands in the Parish of **St. Andrew**
Sutton in **Warrington** which was given to me and my so
 money, produce an annual interest of six pounds sterl **William**
Geo. Knight daughter of my brother **Charles John Knight** Esq^r
 a gift to the wife of after my just debts & funeral expenses be
 remitted that the said twenty pounds a year by quarterly p
 the twenty first of September and the twenty first of December
 equate during the term of the natural life **In witness** where
 Thomas del my hand and seal this ninth day of May 1843 —
 Witness & delivered by the within named **Caroline Elizabeth**
 of my wife in her presence and in the presence of each other
Colw. Knight Esq^r **Edmond Esq^r** Esq^r — **Chas**

This is a Codicil to the will of my
Collage Stephen &
my heirs appointing my sister Edward Almond of Exmouth,
Eustace Charles J. Austin Esq and my nephew
Executors of my said will with my said sister Edward
Mynnes, agents of mine accounts of my said late decedent
Edw. Eliz. Austin — Quiet Subjunctors and de-
terminers to the said will and Testament in the presence of us wit-
nesses present at our hands as witnesses — *Henry C.*
William Eliz Austin Executors Execut.

Elizabeth Munster

[illegible]

Geassandra Elizabeth: hester of Sturton
 Hereby I have testifed made my last will and testament
 that I give the Legacies here & therein appoint my executor
Edward Knight of Sturton above sayd to be paid in
 Legacies and in all other respects of my said last Will
 on the day of obit of our beloved child Thomas and forty five
 next by the said Geassandra Elizabeth Knight as & for a
 & her request in her lifetime and in the lifetime of our auctor
 & *Hester* Our son I have sayd

by quarterly payments on the twenty first of March the twenty first of June the twenty first of September and the twenty first of December to Mrs. Mary Perigord now residing in Edward Street Portman Square during the term of her natural life IN WITNESS whereof I the said Testatrix Cassandra Elizabeth Austen have hereunto set my hand and seal this ninth day of May 1843—Cass; Elizth Austen—Signed sealed Published and Delivered by the witness named Cassandra Elizabeth Austen as and for her last Will and Testament in the presence of Edw'd Knight Chawton Hants Esq're—Charles B. Knight Rector of Chawton Hants

THIS IS A CODICIL to the Will of Cassandra Austen of Chawton Cottage Spinster whereas I have heretofore made my last Will and Testament and thereof appointed my brother Edward Knight of Godmersham Park Esq're sole Executor now I hereby appoint my brother Capt'n Charles J Austen R N and my nephew Edward Knight of Chawton House Esq to be joint Executors of my said Will with my said brother Edward Knight and in all other respects I reaffirm my said Will IN WITNESS whereof I have hereunto set my hand this seventeenth day of March one thousand eight hundred and forty five Cass Elizth Austen—Signed Published and Declared by the said Cassandra Elizabeth Austen as and for a Codicil to her last Will and Testament in the presence of us who at her request in her presence of one another have hereunto set our hands as witnesses—Henry E Austen Lieut R N 7 New Sq—Cassandra Eliza Austen Portsdown Lodge.



Jane Austen and Antigua

Early on in **Mansfield Park** Jane Austen sends Sir Thomas Bertram off to Antigua to attend to his plantations, leaving the Mansfield household conveniently unsupervised for the young people to get up the theatricals unthinkable with Sir Thomas at home. The West Indian destination makes a suitably long voyage: Sir Thomas will be away for a year. It also makes the trip one of danger, with the risks of interception by the French and, in 1812-14, the Americans as well; and the West Indies were a feverous death-trap for Europeans. These facts were common knowledge and Jane Austen does not spell them out. They are to be understood in Fanny Price's anxiety for Sir Thomas, a concern that shows up the stupid or callous indifference of his own daughters.

So the choice of the West Indies is obvious enough. But why Antigua? I came across the answer to this almost by chance, glancing at the index to **The History of the Island of Antigua** by Vere Langford Oliver (1896) where I found the name of George Austen, Rev. This, indeed, turned out (in vol. ii, p. 296) to be Jane Austen's father, named in an indenture dated 13th December, 1788, as a trustee of the Haddon (or Weeks) plantation, a property then in the possession of James Langford Nibbs. There is a reference there to two earlier indentures made in 1760. The Nibbs-John's College, Oxford; and readers of Jane Austen's letters may remember that she was writing to Cassandra on 3rd January, 1801, of a picture of a 'Mr. Nibbs' to be disposed of. A second Antigua



*Sampler worked by Cassandra Austen, and owned by Mrs. P. Stokes,
grand-daughter of Admiral Charles Austen.*

Austen connection is easily explained : both were members of St. connection was through her brother Francis, Flag Captain of the **Canopus** when it reached the island in June 1805. These facts are trivial and add nothing to the meaning of **Mansfield Park**. But they do enable us to see Jane Austen's reliance upon the known world and her fond habit of introducing family associations into her fiction.

B. C. Southam.



Jane Austen in Bath

Copies of Jane Austen in Bath, by Jean Freeman, can be obtained from :—

The Selborne Bookshop, Selborne, Alton, Hampshire.

Price 6/6d. (post free)



Collected Reports of the Jane Austen Society 1949 - 1965

Copies of the Collected Reports, 1949-1965, reprinted in 1967 by Messrs. Wm. Dawson & Sons, Ltd., Cannon House, Folkstone. Kent, price £2 10s. 0d., postage and packing 1/6d., are available to **private** members of the Society with a 20% discount.

Members requiring copies should apply to the Hon. Secretary for an order form, which they should return to him, for forwarding to Messrs. Dawson.

“Jane Austen and Charm”

A Talk by Miss Elizabeth Bowen
to the Jane Austen Society on 19th July, 1969

What a world there is to be said about Jane Austen, and how much **has** been said! I feel it an honour—clearly, but also I feel it is rather a boldness on my part to add one word more. One other angle—my own.

Charm. . . .

I am seeing her novels in this way, because she so much loved sociability, loved society, loved the world in the way in which, surely, God intended us to enjoy it. Assemblies of people, impromptu or formal; neighbourhoods; driving off in carriages to see other places; the long-anticipated ball or the sudden occasion when somebody sat down to the piano and others danced delightedly. People gathering at round tables in the evening to play games—cards or the letter word games there were. All these were very much part of the exhilaration, I am sure, of her existence, quietly though she lived. And these provide so much that is lovely and exhilarating in her art. I look on us all here this afternoon, you who come here summer after summer, some of us who come back here after a long time, some who come for the first time, as being at one more great splendid social gathering in her honour.

Jane Austen did not, as we know, think of people in the mass. She did not visualize, when she wrote, anonymous crowds or groups or classifications of people. Her genius was that she pin-pointed individuals. When one comes to think—do any of the numerous characters in those five completed novels, and the fragments of others, ever really repeat themselves? She had an acute and brilliant sense of the individuality of the individual, the thing that makes a person unique—conventional though they may appear to the outer eye.

Her pin-pointing of people—or should I say, her indication of people; for the ‘pin’ has about it an unkind sound?—was dual. It took place both on the surface and in depth. First of all, she showed their outward behaviour: how each of them, he or she, comported himself or herself **socially** as an individual. She portrayed the outside face they turned to the world, that face we all of us see when we look in the glass before faring forth to see what the day will bring. But her keenest sense was of the **interior** person, the person behind the face—that mysterious being, to a degree hidden, sometimes, even from those they love. She could suggest, in her seemingly unanalytical art, the existence of that strange fund of daydreams and desires and thoughts and memories which ultimately make each of us—you and me—the differentiated creatures which we are.

The extension of her genius, her simultaneous interest in the "outer" and the "inner," makes her miraculously alert to the susceptibilities people have with regard to each other—their quickness to be affected by one another. Nor is that confined to falling in love. Lovers, of course, have a heightened, extreme awareness one of the other. Mutual love is a sort of joyous discovery—as, too, is an illuminating friendship. But also, in the more ordinary fields of life, the more prosaic wear-and-tear of work or society, we are constantly making contacts and feeling influences. We **are**, to a certain extent, in each others' power. Impressions are made upon us—they may be impressions we cannot at first define. Sometimes, after making a new acquaintance, we find ourselves thinking along unfamiliar lines. Not sure, yet, whether So-and-So is agreeable, we continue to ponder. . . . It's a great thing, the way we react to people—**my** idea of a truly dismal old age would be, one in which this lively power died down, leaving one sunk (with regard to one's fellow-man) in a neutral apathy. Awareness of, curiosity as to people, readiness to be intrigued or disturbed by them, denotes, surely, a healthy human vitality. Were that to die down, what a grievous loss !

As **you**—loving her, loving the novels—do not need to be told, there is not an iota of apathy in Jane Austen. Possibly the nearest of her characters to show it is **Mansfield Park's** otherwise agreeable Lady Bertram—who, ensconced with Pug on her sofa, is unconscious of most of the human race. Her instincts, so far as they go, are kindly, but placidly negative. Lady Bertram differs profoundly from her creator, the essence of whose art is a keen concern with encounters, and what comes of them, and relationships. And, how often encounters are sensational ! With the same intentness, if not in the same manner as Tolstoy or Proust, she chronicles interplay between persons, its nature (different in each case) and its effects on them. She can show not only how but **why** two particular people are drawn to each other. And this, almost invariably, she does suggest : one is the charmer, the other the charmed.

First encounters are the starting-point of most of her stories, and what comes of them provides the subsequent plot. Second thoughts, reconsiderations, revised opinions, occasionally total changes of heart—these, within her outwardly gentle novels, become dramas.

A great part is played by the entrance of a new person, or persons, into an existing group—usually a smallish and fairly close one. Other novelists, as we know, use that device, but Jane Austen does so with peculiar felicity. We have, for instance, Frank Churchill, who in **Emma** arrives in Highbury—at last ! Such a build-up had been given to that young man that everyone is agog to see him : will he or will he not live up to his legend ? Then there are the Crawfords, brother and sister, flashing in from the

outside world to stay at the parsonage, thereby rippling the placid waters of **Mansfield Park**. **Pride and Prejudice** opens, you will remember, with intense excitement caused by a rich young bachelor's moving into a modest Hertfordshire neighbourhood—as things turn out, it is not the tenant of Netherfield but his friend and guest, the stand-offish Darcy, who is to command the stage.

Jane Austen heroes and heroines are young: none over thirty, most of them in their late teens or early twenties. And, naturally, the early years are those in which susceptibilities are at their most acute, and sense of drama and power to enjoy or engender day-dreams are at their full. What is phenomenal about her writing is, that though many of us—I, certainly—have exceeded those characters' ages by some decades, she so touches on a perpetual youth in all of us that we feel, with regard to those young men and maidens, no gulf of the years. We identify with them, we participate in their doings, their storms and stresses, their dazzling outbursts of high spirits, their hopes and fears. Returning to these novels of hers, again and again, we feel more rather than less involved in them as our lives go on. As our own experience deepens, we delve more deeply. At each re-reading, we are the more struck by instances of her uncanny perception.

Impressions. . . with their element of illusion (delusion, sometimes)! I need not remind you that **Pride and Prejudice**, in its original draft, was to have been entitled "First Impressions." And in all the novels except for the more sober **Persuasion**, what a theme, what a source of delight those are. Illusion: that enticing and dangerous world! One speaks of a conjuror as being "a master of illusion"—he can command it, and something akin to him is in of illusion—he can command it, and something akin to him is Jane Austen. Simultaneously she can summon illusion up, portray it, and suggest the extent of its tricky power. Certainly some of her men, some of her women, have the power to project it. There is a sort of radiant give-off from their personalities. A ripple is set up when they enter a room: where they are, wherever they are, things happen. . . What was Jane Austen's attitude to illusion? I should say, curiously impartial. She never denounces it; she never, even by inference, advises the reader to mistrust it, or steer clear of it. She never suggests that illusion is necessarily hollow—though she rates high, indeed most highly of all, the person who is absolute in integrity.

I think, that herself she enjoyed illusion as part of the sunshine and music of existence. She could show, in the case of Marianne Dashwood, the chaos caused by illusion's collapse. Danger, as she saw it, entered the picture when illusion was exploited for evil ends, or misused by a careless, cold or designing person—using his or her charm to demoralise or destroy. She demonstrates, as the different stories proceed, that ultimately in life we need something

solid. Charm is not a thing in which to invest too much, or on which to base our entire judgement. . . . Yes. I have been talking about "illusion," but everything I have been saying refers to **charm**.

Jane Austen treats charm (and treats with charm) in two manners. She studies it as one might the play of a fountain: something in action—the charm exercised by one person upon another, and that other's response. And, as I said earlier, this is by no means confined to outright **love**: we have, for instance, young people making "conquests" of their elders—Frank Churchill endearing himself to his newly-acquired stepmother, dear Mrs. Weston; Henry Crawford scoring a major success with the formidable and suspicious Sir Thomas Bertram. We see girls forming enthusiastic admirations (not always lasting ones) for each other, and impetuous friendships struck up between lively young men. Such mild attractions, minor relationships, strew our everyday life: the crystal-clear air of a Jane Austen novel enhances them.

And in what second way does she treat with charm? Answer: she knows exactly how to **convey it**—to make it act on the reader, on you, on me. She causes the more fortunate of her characters, those endowed with personal fascination, to turn their ray directly upon us; nor do we fail, when they do so, to be susceptible. As in real life tastes vary—each of us has a "favourite," or two, or three; mine might not be yours, for instance, nor yours mine. The whole thing is a matter of temperament, not of rule.

Almost everybody reacts to the two Crawfords, the engaging, slightly Byronic Henry and his siren sister Mary, brown-skinned, dark-eyed—who operates like a witch on poor Edmund Bertram. Her jet set chatter grates on him, as on us; yet she's so brilliantly mixed, with her ready sympathies, her discreet admirations, her touch of exoticism, her delight in music, as to be a distinctly seductive creature. Second-rate she is—but with endless physical grace. What else draws Edmund, morning after morning, to the parsonage parlour where Mary is playing her harp? "A young woman, pretty, lively, with a harp as elegant as herself; and both placed near a window cut down to the ground and opening on a little lawn surrounded by shrubs in the rich foliage of summer. . . ." **Mansfield Park** holds this innocent picture of enchantment at work.

Henry Crawford, from the first glance, is a dangerous man. Egotism, a heady desire to please and too worldly an education have marked and marred him. Yet—he is generous, likeable, highly intelligent; too good by half for the aimless life he espouses. He is "plain," the young Ladies decide, and asked beautiful teeth. (I recall that when I was very young and asked one of my aunts what "a cad" was, she replied, "A man who shows his

teeth when he smiles.") I do not see Henry as a cad, but he was hell-bent. We see him, through Fanny's horrified eyes, playing fast and loose with her cousins the two Junoesque Miss Bertrams—nor does it stop there; for the elder, the outcome is to be tragic. **Mansfield Park** contains the one guilty passion in the whole of Jane Austen (silly Lydia Bennet's escapade with Wickham hardly counts, surely ?) and we feel its diabolical force, and the fell blow it deals to the noble house. The scandal bows Sir Thomas and his family to the ground—and, this Henry Crawford has brought about, out of no more than cynical sensuality, on the rebound against his one saving instinct: his love for Fanny. **Had** Fanny consented to marry him, what then? She recoiled. Yet, showing the best of himself, he might still have won her. He lost her by that sudden act of insanity. . . The Jane Austen novel I have re-read most lately is **Mansfield Park**; which reminds me that charm of persons (looks, mind and manner) was not the only one she felt and knew how to render. She felt, and strongly felt, the charm of a place. She was drawn as Fanny to Mansfield Park (meaning, the house) with its classic uprightness of architecture and behaviour. Its very formality was gracious, its orderliness calming and benevolent. There were lyrical hours in that high-ceilinged drawing room: a summer evening, two young people, together, by a big open window, gazing up at the stars. . . Groups gathering round the fire, laughing and talking. . . A conversation about Shakespeare. . . . Comings and goings; throughout all, Lady Bertram euphorically languid on her sofa. . . What a deep joy Fanny feels, coming back again after three month's absence (even though, now, she enters a stricken household, shadowed by a daughter's disgrace). This mansion is, definitely, a character—and a prominent character—in the novel it names.

Also a character is Hartfield, that "modern" (presumably Regency) residence, the scene of **Emma**—well warmed, sedate yet cheerful, spick-and-span. Hartfield has all the charm of a sunny house. In spite of the ceaseless fussing of Mr. Woodhouse, a tranquil and far from boring existence went on here: Mr. Knightly dropping in most evenings, sociabilities (if limited ones) in Highbury, the pleasures of sallying forth to shop in the High Street. As mistress of Hartfield, young Miss Woodhouse asks nothing better—in stating that she intends never to marry she is (one feels) absolutely sincere. More romantic is the Devonshire cottage, first background of **Sense and Sensibility**: in it, bereaved Mrs. Dashwood and her three daughters form a lyrical group. I imagine the windows were diamond-paned. Sheets of music, poetry books, sketches by the girls made a pretty disorder in the small but delightful parlour. And all round were lush green valleys, lanes, airy upland country. It is in this setting that—can one wonder!—Marianne fatally falls in love with Willoughby.

False Willoughby : yet, how is one to judge him ? Nature made him the answer to a lovely seventeen year-old maiden's unconscious prayer—this gay cavalier, magically coming to the rescue, on his thoroughbred horse. In every way, upon every plane, she found him a kindred soul. As a family, the Dashwoods succumb to Willoughby—till Marianne's lack of restraint begins to alarm them. And rightly : after the idyll comes the heartbreak, when Willoughby rides away and is no more seen. Willoughby, like that more "realised" character Henry Crawford, is self-destructive—therefore, a destroyer. Not only his extravagances have undone him ; he is "betrayed by what is false within." A bad hat ? Yes, but with potentials of good in him. His behaviour to Marianne is ultimately explained, though never excused. Nor can he be quickly forgiven : that **dreadful** letter he sends to her in London ! Having read it, "she buried her face in the pillow and almost screamed with agony."

That all but scream is the furthest extreme of love, of love at its most disasterously romantic, that Jane Austen was to think fit to show us. In the later novels, the pain, anxiety and frustration attendant on unrequited love are endured in silence, with stoicism—true (though the heroine cannot foresee this), things are to end well. Fanny Price hopelessly yearns for her cousin Edmund ; in Anne Elliott, the reappearance of Captain Wentworth stirs up heart-ache, hopeless regret, an unbearable sense of the might-have-been. Jane Fairfax endures, without self-betrayal, the miseries of her secret engagement to Frank Churchill, that careless flibbertigibbet. Little Harriet Smith comports herself with pathetic dignity after that awful let-down about Mr. Elton.

Emma, dear Emma Woodhouse—most hardy, least emotional of the Jane Austen women, clear-headed throughout. After a giddily flirtatious interlude with Frank Churchill (ended by his departure from Highbury) she coolly takes stock of her own feelings. Vanity has been satisfied, interest aroused ; she is not, she finds, wholly indifferent to that young man. But so far, no further. "No," Emma decides, "I am enough in love, and I should be sorry to be any more so." So much (till, ultimately, it is a matter of Mr. Knightly) for the tender passion !

I spoke, earlier, of Jane Austen's power of making her characters not only attractive to each other but, in several cases, attractive to **us**. I repeat, taste in characters varies. For my own part, for instance, I find little actual charm in Elizabeth Bennet—though she counts her admirers by the million. For me, she is too diamond-hard, too adroit. And really a chatterbox. . . The dearest, to me, of the heroines are the more silent ones : Fanny, whom I thought mousey when I was young but whose delicate, wind-flower fascination I now see, and the withdrawn, yet enchantingly graceful, Anne. I have also great sympathy for Marianne Dash-

wood—perhaps because she was so intransigent, so “impossible.” Fanny and Anne owe much to the subtly poetic treatment accorded them by their creator. They have both, also, a curious spiritual strength, which contrasts, attractively, with their fragile exteriors. To that add a haunting, disturbing quality—though Wentworth, for years after the break with Anne, had thought he could never forgive her, he could never forget her; and Fanny indelibly dints the heart of that experienced *roué* Henry Crawford. With which of these two (I mean to say, Anne or Fanny) should I have fallen in love, had I been a man?

And as to the men? I find sardonic John Knightly extremely taking, and only just less so his elder brother. . . Darcy? Fascinating, in his perverse way, but “charming” I find not to be exactly the word. What pains he was at, indeed, to be *non-charming*: could anyone have survived those original snubs? Darcy remains—surely?—a man in outline, lacking substantiality. His creator was, one remembers, at the time of his creation, a youthful prodigy: he does not lack masculinity, but how far more man-like are the more filled-in male characters of her later art. Teasing young Henry Tilney (there is a charmer!) is touched in also, with the fleeting and jubilant pen of extreme youth. Frank Churchill, rightly diagnosed by Emma as a lightweight, gets away with egregious silliness and behaviour—and is most engaging! He could win any woman, I fancy, but might not keep her. I *should* like to have met him. I am just as glad I never met Henry Crawford; by which I mean to say, better safe than sorry.

Evil can tarnish charm—and that is a tragedy, which the novels lament. Jane Austen, for whom the essence of happiness was innocence, cannot but be sad to see a bright thing decay, an enchantment perish, an illusion vanish like a burst bubble. “*But,*” one might hear her cry out, “this is *not* inevitable!” There are lasting radiances, and enduring beauties. There are lifelong fidelities. Disguised by her irony, her fastidiousness, there was within Jane Austen a sturdy optimism—she was all for life, she intensely believed in it. Never did she favour the kind of people who are over-cautious, timid and self-preserving. Her sympathies went out to takers of risks; and romantic love she saw as one of the greatest. Wise herself, she shows us her characters growing more wise with time: one may not only live and learn, one may love and learn. Once storm-tossed, they enter on placid waters—we watch them steer happily into harbour.

Edmund, shocked and wounded by Mary, finds peace with Fanny. Marianne, chastened by the deception of Willoughby, turns to her patient colonel. Deserving Elinor marries deserving Edward (and how dull he was!), Elizabeth learns to idolise Darcy. Emma and Mr. Knightly, Anne and Captain Wentworth—one and all, they vanish into tranquility. Yet did they perhaps look back?

One would like to think so. Look back, as they could afford to, without pain, at the sunbursts and storms of their wilder hours? Did they regret those hours?—I cannot think so. **Never** to have bathed in the rainbow of illusion, never to have vibrated to the charm of the charmer : that would have been nothing but a loss, surely?

There come to me two lines of Robert Browning's:—

**How sad and mad and bad it was,
But ah, how it was sweet !**

THE JANE AUSTEN SOCIETY

Report for the Year, 1970



From 'The Repository 1814'

THE JANE AUSTEN SOCIETY

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THE JANE AUSTEN SOCIETY

Report for the year 1970

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Membership

There were eighty seven new members during the year, of whom thirty seven became Life Members, as did thirty two old members.

It may be of interest to members to know that the following institutions are members of the Society :

Brooklyn Public Library, Brooklyn, New York
Barr Smith Library, University of Adelaide, S. Australia
County Branch Librarian, Alton, Hampshire
Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland, Ohio
Asa Griggs Candler Library, Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia
Grinnell College Library, Iowa
Hawaii University Library, Honolulu
Henry E. Huntington Library, San Marino, California
University of Iowa Libraries, Iowa
University of Illinois Library, Chicago
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Los Angeles
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City Librarian, Reference Library, Leeds
MacKinnick Memorial Library, University of S. Carolina,
Columbia
National Library, Ottawa
Oregon State University Library, Corvallis, Oregon
Pequot Library, Southport, Connecticut
Bibliothèque de l'Université de Paris à la Sorbonne, Paris
Russell Sage College Library, Troy, New York
St. Swithin's School, Winchester
University of Saskatchewan, Regina
Sheffield University Library, Sheffield
London University Library
Victoria University of Wellington Library, Wellington,
New Zealand
Dean and Chapter, Winchester Cathedral

Annual General Meeting

The Annual General Meeting was held at Chawton House, by permission of Major and Mrs. Edward Knight, on Saturday, 18th July, when some 430 members and their guests were present. Lord David Cecil presided.

The minutes of the last Annual Meeting, having been printed in the Annual Report, were taken as read.

The Hon. Secretary presented the Report for 1969. This was seconded by Mr. G. P. Eastern and carried.

The Hon. Treasurer presented the Accounts for 1969. He also proposed that the Annual Subscription be raised from 5/-(25p) to 10/-(50p), and Life Membership from £5 to £10, with effect from 1st January, 1971. These motions were seconded by the Rev. A. L. B. Hay, and carried.

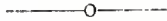
Mr. J. Butler-Kearney proposed that Lord David Cecil be re-elected President, the Duke of Wellington and Mr. John Gore Vice-Presidents, and Sir Hugh Smiley, Bt., Chairman of the Society. This was seconded by Mr. F. F. P. Gill and carried.

The President proposed that the Committee be re-elected en bloc.

The meeting was addressed by Miss Rachel Trickett, Fellow and Tutor in English at St. Hugh's College, Oxford, whose subject was 'Jane Austen's Imagination.'

A vote of thanks was proposed by Major John Bowen, seconded by Mrs. E. K. Wade, and carried.

The President closed the meeting by thanking Major and Mrs. Edward Knight for once again lending Chawton House for the meeting.



Annual General Meeting - 1971

The Annual General Meeting will be held at Chawton House, by kind permission of Major and Mrs. Edward Knight, on Saturday, 17th July. The meeting will be addressed by Dr. Fillipe Donini, Director of the Italian Institute in London, who will speak on 'Jane Austen in Italy.'

Amateur Theatricals

EVELYN M. HOWE

In 1783, when the Austen family began thinking about staging plays at Steventon, in winter in the Rectory, in summer in their barn, they were joining in one of the 1780's most fashionable amusements. Squires like Oldfield Bowles of Oxfordshire, peers like Lord Holland, had preceded them, but several celebrated private theatres, including Lord Barrymore's imitation of Covent Garden, opened later, and the Margravine of Anspach's not until 1793.

Unless in a mansion like Richmond House, few rooms, once the local carpenter had equipped them with a temporary stage, could hold more than a handful of guests - though too many to please Fanny Burney as, trembling and flushed, she performed at her uncle's in Worcestershire. Many neighbouring families and villagers, though, could crowd into a barn; one of the largest. Lord Villiers' combined barn and coach house near Henley, seated three hundred. Scenery might be painted by one of the family (Lady Aldborough made a backdrop of Buxton) or by a friend (a young landscape painter, Thomas Jones, helped Bowles), but usually a scene painter from a nearby town was hired. In doing so the Bertrams of *Mansfield Park* probably reflected the Austens' own practice. Amateurs, either family or friends, wrote the prologues and epilogues, even for Barrymore's elegant productions; Jane Austen's brother James did so at Steventon.

Tragedies, Shakespeare's at Bowles's, *Cato* at the Dowager Lady Townsend's, were occasionally performed, but the normal fare was light comedy, especially recent London successes. The Rev. George Austen too, though a schoolmaster, used his theatre chiefly for entertainment. He once staged a tragedy, Franklin's *Matilda*, but usually followed current practice and the wishes of his fashionable niece, the Comtesse de Feuillide, and chose Mrs. Cowley's or Garrick's latest comedy.

By 1800 many theatres had disappeared through fire, debts, death, or changing interests and stiffening moral standards. After the Comte de Feuillide was guillotined in the Reign of Terror, the Austen's enthusiasm waned. In 1814 readers of *Mansfield Park* may have recalled nostalgically their own youthful stage debuts in a gayer age, but few probably were surprised that *Lovers' Vows* never got beyond rehearsals.

A Source for Sanditon ?

B. C. SOUTHAM

Scholars love source-hunting. But for those of us who have to listen to their hunting-stories, the pursuit can sound only trivial and tiresome, especially when the subject is a writer as witty and entertaining as Jane Austen. Whatever her sources, do they matter ? Does our ignorance or knowledge of them make any difference in the long run to our enjoyment of the novels ? Reluctantly (for I am by temperament and profession a hunter-of-sources), I must admit that the answer is probably No. And so this note is unashamedly directed to my fellow-sourcers.

My proposal is that the idea for **Sanditon**, and some of its details, may have been suggested to Jane Austen by **The Magic of Wealth**, a novel by Thomas Skinner Surr, published in 1815, and since then virtually forgotten. Surr's story is set around the town of Flimflampton, 'a new and rising watering place, created, as it were, by magic, out of a few fishing huts, by the power and wealth of a certain rich banker.' The 'magic' is of course the 'magic' of the book's title. Surr is particularly concerned to show how the power of money can be corrupting and destructive. It is a novel with a purpose, described by him in the prefatory Advertizement as a 'vehicle of opinions,' not just the large and simple truism that money is the root of evil, but the specific black-magic of money in Regency England. He devotes a good deal of space to discussing and describing how the ideals and values of old England have been corrupted by the 'trafficking spirit of the times,' by the satanic force of the bankers, traffickers in paper wealth, the creators of avarice and bankruptcy. Gone is the old England of hospitality and the traditional pride and dignity of the local squire, whose wealth was in his land, whose higher wealth was in his concern for those he ruled and cared for, his servants and tenants and the parish around.

Anyone who reads this novel alongside **Sanditon** will be able to judge for himself the likelihood of a direct connection between the two works ; to my eyes, a very likely connection. But perhaps the real value of such a comparison is for the historian and for anyone interested in the relationship between the novel and society. **Sanditon** serves to remind us that Jane Austen, for all the narrowness of her social scene, for all her concentration upon character, is the most penetrating and rewarding historian of her times. The fact that **Sanditon** is a novel of high comedy should not deceive us. The fate of the 'real village of Sanditon,' now touched by 'the Spirit of the day,' is treated swiftly and lightly. But the village itself, its neighbourhood, its inhabitants and visitors, are caught up in the same spirit of change and restlessness, what Cobbett diagnosed as 'morbid restlessness,' the malaise of the time.



A dress in blue and maroon striped silk, believed to have belonged to Jane Austen, and bought by the Society at Christie's, July 1970, and now on view at Jane Austen's House

Travels of a Temple Bell

In 1850, Rear-Admiral Charles Austen, C.B., Jane Austen's youngest brother, was appointed Commander-in-Chief on the East India Station, with his headquarters at Trincomalee in Ceylon. In April 1852, flying his flag in the steam sloop *Rattler*, he commanded the naval force at the capture of Rangoon.

The Admiral gave Captain Spencer Ellman, in command of the *Salamander*, permission to open the attack, which he did by firing the first shot himself. Seeing the *Rattler*, between the *Salamander* and the city of Rangoon, Captain Ellman trained the gun on a large pagoda, and waited until the *Rattler* was on the direct line of fire, when he sent the shot over the Admiral's head, and hit the pagoda. The Commander-in-Chief remarked "the man who fired that shot is looking for promotion." Admiral Austen died in October of the same year.

Until September 1958, when command of the East Indies Station was transferred to Aden, a Burmese temple bell hung at Admiralty House, Trincomalee, bearing the following inscription :

PRESENTED

By the Captors at the storming of

R A N G O O N

14th APRIL 1852, to

REAR ADMIRAL AUSTEN C.B.

Commander-in-Chief of the Naval Force employed on that occasion

And left by him at the

ADMIRALTY HOUSE, TRINCOMALEE

as an HEIR LOOM

At Aden the bell was erected on the patio of Admiralty House, where it remained until November 1967, when command was transferred to Bahrain. It now hangs there outside Navy House, the home of Commander, Naval Forces Gulf.

We are indebted to Miss Valerie Nelson, a member of the Society, and Personal Assistant to the Political Resident, Persian Gulf, for providing us with the photograph and many of the facts about the bell.

Most of the East Indies Station records were lost in a fire in the Naval Headquarters during World War II. But it would be nice to think that this bell hung in the pagoda upon which Captain Ellman scored his bull's eye.

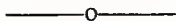


photo : C.P.O. Le Count, R.N.

Jane Austen in Bath

Copies of *Jane Austen in Bath*, by Jean Freeman, can be obtained from: The Selborne Bookshop, Selborne, Alton, Hampshire.

Price: 33p (post free)



Collected Reports of the Jane Austen Society 1949 - 1965

Copies of the *Collected Reports, 1949-1965*, reprinted in 1967 by Messrs. Wm. Dawson and Sons, Ltd., Cannon House, Folkstone, Kent, price £2.50, postage and packing 10p, are available to **private** members of the Society with a twenty per cent discount.

Members requiring copies should apply to the Hon. Secretary for an order form, which they should return to him, for forwarding to Messrs. Dawson.

Jane Austen's Imagination

Address given by Miss Rachel Trickett
at the Annual General Meeting

Nobody disputes that Jane Austen is one of our greatest writers. Yet the very nature of her art makes it difficult to talk about its quality. She is so naturalistic, so insidiously persuasive, so life-like that people find it hard to avoid the temptation of treating her as a sort of literary relative about whom it is possible to gossip happily in a way that can reduce her below the level of the very best to which she belongs. On the other hand, more deliberately sophisticated critics fall into an equal error; they are all alert to discover under the deceptive urbane surface of her novels complex themes, moral paradoxes, ironies and ambiguities she herself would never have understood in their terms. It has always been a matter of secret congratulation to English readers that Jane Austen, in spite of her restricted social scope, her few inches of ivory, shares the imaginative grandeur of the very greatest novelists - like so many of our best writers - like Wordsworth and Hardy whom she resembles in no other way - she is so peculiarly English in her environment, her attitude and her language that it is often hard to explain in more general terms her particular power. But, being a great creative artist of the highest kind, she possesses a range - sometimes explicit, sometimes latent, which deserves full acknowledgement. She is neither the comfortable, domesticated, consolatory story-teller some of her admirers seem to suggest, nor the heavy moralist other critics assume. Jane Austen subscribed to the best moral code of her time, and, inherited from the eighteenth century, it was by no means an unenlightened one; she also enjoyed depicting the minutiae of the everyday life of her society; but the sum of her genius is much more than this. She is a great comic artist, with all the complexity, all the astonishing honesty and all the lively multiplicity of vision which such a title claims for her.

Some years ago when I was writing an article on Jane Austen's reputation in the 19th century, I was very much struck by the fact that, from the first, her critics and admirers were aware of a two-sidedness in her work. Some veered in one direction - admiring her brilliant naturalism in dialogue and characterisation; Scott and Macaulay particularly praised her for this. Others were even more impressed by her power of construction and organisation. Archbishop Whatley the early 19th century critic wondered whether she could possibly have read Aristotle, so perfect were her plots. George Henry Lewes, while claiming, perhaps with understandable partiality, that George Eliot equalled her in characterisation, humour and general realism, admitted that Jane Austen was her superior in one respect - "the economy of her art." But this very

artistry, "art for art's sake" Lewes calls it - one of the first examples I know (for the article was written in 1851) of the phrase in English criticism, made the 19th century uneasy. Like her wit, which has a very 18th century complexion, it seemed to them cold, perhaps even a little disagreeable. In defence her admirers took to speaking of her gentle, feminine humour, her sweet, subtle ridicule, her charm, reducing the devastating clarity of her intellectual vision to a sort of domestic raillery. One very talented and competent female novelist of the period, Margaret Oliphant, reviewing James Austen Leigh's memoir of his aunt in 1871 was perhaps the first openly to admit that the clarity of Jane Austen's ridicule was a little too much for her - uncomfortable, certainly unkind and possibly uncharitable.

Before we raise the laugh against Mrs. Oliphant, let us for a moment look at Jane Austen as if we had never read her before, or were not conditioned to think of her as warmly as we do. In contrast with her 18th century predecessors, not only with Fanny Burney, but with such great comic artists as Fielding, even in comparison with the astonishing candour of Johnson, she can still appear ruthless in her brilliant ridicule, nearer perhaps in this to Congreve and the Restoration wits than to the gentler moralists of the succeeding age. Sentimentality does not exist in Jane Austen's world; it is odd that she should be so popular; there are very few favourite authors who do not have a touch of the consoling quality. But Jane Austen has none. I can't think of a single passage in her works which betrays it. Let me remind you of one or two observations from her earlier novels to illustrate this.

"Mrs. Allen was one of that numerous class of females whose society can raise no other emotion than surprise at there being any men in the world who could like them well enough to marry them. She had neither beauty, genius, accomplishment nor manner. The air of a gentlewoman, a great deal of quiet, inactive good temper, and a trifling turn of mind, were all that could account for her being the choice of a sensible intelligent man like Mr. Allen."

Mrs. Allen herself is not the only butt here. Mr. Allen and with him most of his sex are coolly and impartially fixed by the devastating judgement. It is judgement supported a few chapters later by this comment:

"Catherine was heartily ashamed of her ignorance - a misplaced shame. Where people wish to attach they should always be ignorant. To come with a well-informed mind is to come with an inability of administering to the vanity of others, which a sensible person would always wish to avoid. A woman, especially if she has the misfortune of knowing anything, should conceal it as well as she can."

The advantages of natural folly in a beautiful girl have already been set forth by the capital pen of a sister author; and to her treatment of the subject I will only add in justice to men, that though, to the larger and more trifling part of the sex, imbecility in females is a great enhancement of their personal charms, there is a portion of them too reasonable, and too well-informed themselves, to desire anything more in a woman than ignorance."

This is *Northanger Abbey*, a high-spirited book where the author evidently enjoys hitting all her targets. In her next work *Sense and Sensibility* these targets have multiplied ; children especially as well as men come under her cool scrutiny. At first we hear that Mr. Dashwood left his estate to a nephew

“who had so far gained on the affections of his uncle by such attractions as are by no means unusual in children of two or three years old - an imperfect articulation, an earnest desire of having his own way, many cunning tricks, and a great deal of noise.”

And again :

“Conversation, however, was not wanting, for Sir John was chatty, and Lady Middleton had taken the wise precaution of bringing with her their eldest child, a fine little boy of about six years old, by which means there was one subject always to be resorted to by the ladies in case of extremity ; for they had to inquire his name and age, admire his beauty, and ask him questions which his mother answered for him, while he hung about her and held down his head, to the great surprise of her ladyship who wondered at his being so shy before company, as he could make enough noise at home. On every formal visit a child ought to be of the party, by way of provision for discourse.”

The description of the Misses Steele sycophantically enduring the torments of the ill-behaved Middleton children which, to their mother “suggested no other surprise than that Elinor and Marianne should sit so composedly by without claiming a share in what was passing,” and the account of the screaming little girl who has to be consoled with apricot jam look forward to similar disgust with noisy children and doting mothers in *Persuasion*. You will remember how Anne Elliot suffers from the Musgrove children and with what embarrassment she is delivered from little Walter clamouring on her back by Captain Wentworth’s firm intervention. As for Mrs. Musgrove senior, she comes in for the unkindest cut of all:

“Mrs. Musgrove was of a comfortable, substantial size, infinitely more fitted by nature to express good cheer and humour than tenderness and sentiment ; and while the agitations of Anne’s slender form and pensive face may be considered as very completely screened, Captain Wentworth should be allowed some credit for the self-command with which he attended to her large fat sighings over the destiny of a son whom alive nobody had cared for.”

Personal size and mental sorrow have certainly no necessary proportions. A large bulky figure has as good a right to be in a deep affliction as the most graceful set of limbs in the world. But fair or not fair, there are unbecoming conjunctions, which reason will patronise in vain, which taste cannot tolerate, which ridicule will seize.”

Not a very comfortable observation when translated from the page to the keen actual attentive eye of the spectator. It is an uneasy speculation, to imagine the responses of Jane Austen’s mind while she civilly entertained the visits of friends and neighbours.

Sense and Sensibility suggests other areas of vividly clear sighted observation conveyed in the same cool impartial tone of matter of fact :

“Mrs. Ferrar’s complexion was sallow, and her features small without

beauty and naturally without expression ; but a lucky contraction of the brow had rescued her countenance from the disgrace of insipidity by giving it the strong characters of pride and ill-nature. She was not a woman of many words, for unlike people in general, she apportioned them to the number of her ideas."

As with the earlier comment on Mrs. Allen, Jane Austen here neatly kills two birds with one stone ; general idle diffuseness in talk, and Mrs. Ferrars' avoidance of this through poverty of intellect. If the picture gave the impression of deliberate caricature we should relish its sharpness in a different way ; but it is presented to us quite simply as a naturalistic just observation ; it forces us to drop the scales from our eyes - to change our conventional way of looking at things and people. So too the smart crack she cannot resist making, which has all the audacity of wit, about the young man who keeps Marianne and Elinor waiting in the jeweller's while he chooses a toothpick :

"He had no leisure to bestow any other attention on the two ladies than what was comprised in three or four very broad stares ; a kind of notice which served to imprint on Elinor the remembrance of a person and face of strong, natural, sterling insignificance."

On the whole, we do not have the nerve to admit such observations to ourselves. One suspects that many readers of Jane Austen pass them over in the general amiable flow of the story. To do so is to miss her imaginative point ; her realism rouses laughter, but it is realism all the same, and it can and should rouse discomfort, like the observations of any true satirist.

From these and there are many similar shafts in all her works, we can see why Mrs. Oliphant, heir to a gentler and more romantic tradition of humour, could speak of Jane Austen's "quiet cynicism." To Mrs. Oliphant it seemed as if nothing were sacred to her ; nothing escaped her ridicule - love, motherhood, the clergy, the family, children, youth or age. She was not afraid to call a fool a fool. Nor are her characters. Where else in English fiction do you find so many remarks in ordinary day to day dialogue of such quite astonishing rudeness ? Mr. Palmer in *Sense and Sensibility* reacts to his silly wife by sullen ill-temper :

"My love, you contradict everybody," said his wife with her usual laugh. "Do you know that you are quite rude ?"

"I did not know I contradicted anybody in calling you mother ill-bred," he replied.

Darcy in *Pride and Prejudice* is more than proud ; he is rude to the point of affront, from his first remark about Elizabeth in the ballroom to his extraordinary proposal which calls forth her rebuke for behaviour that is not "gentleman-like." However civil their language and style, the characters in Jane Austen's novels speak with a ruthless candour.

But this quality which Mrs. Oliphant describes as relentless is itself an attribute of high comedy. Nothing is to be protected from the play of wit and clarity. And Jane Austen is not only alert to

recognise folly ; she dearly loves a fool. Elizabeth Bennett, the most brilliant and Shakespearian of her comic heroines is tersely introduced by her author as having "a lively, playful disposition which delighted in anything ridiculous." And the ridiculous can only be perceived when the concealments of convention, concession and even politeness have been stripped away. That ruthless objectivity which accounts both for her naturalism and for her habit of seeing at once what is normally kept secret about human stupidity by a sort of conspiracy of silence on the part of novelists and readers, that cool temperate tone - not unlike Swift's deceptive simplicity, are yet basically quite different from Swift, and unlike even the honesty of her favourite mentor, Johnson. For they operate together with a gaiety and creative delight, a sort of joy which is less the prerogative of the satirist than of the great comic artist. When Keats said of Shakespeare's genius that it took as much delight in creating an Iago as an Imogen, he meant delight. And it is the same sort of genius which in Jane Austen creates a Lady Catherine De Bourgh and a Sir Walter Elliot with as much delight as an Emma or a Captain Wentworth. Such delight, wherever it is found in literature, is infectious. It accounts for our satisfaction in terrifying tragedies and for our hilarity at the comic spectacle of absurdity, folly, even vice. But the art of comedy, its peculiar tact and delicacy, is to enable us to feel secure that this pleasure in the perfect realisation of something which in life might rouse disgust or boredom or irritation, is so complete that no doubts intrude. Comedy is the most difficult of the literary arts for so many adjustments have to be made, so many delicate manoeuvres to avoid the awkward intrusive suspicion that some character may be pitiable rather than funny, another disgraceful rather than absurd, and another superficial rather than brilliant. Some of the finest comedies - Congreve's for example, minimise the area of imaginative response both in the author and the audience, limit their scope and range. leave out many things quite deliberately and appropriately in order to give us this security. By omitting much they present us with a consciously distorted but aesthetically satisfying angle on life. Jane Austen's more cautious critics sometimes suggest that, at her most successful, this is what she does. "Let other pens than mine dwell on guilt and misery" she declares. But the greatest comic writers, Shakespeare and Molière particularly, somehow succeed in incorporating much more in their created world ; they hint at tragedy and admit catastrophe, disappointment and error. Their gayest works carry reverberations from a darker hinterland. I believe that Jane Austen, too, does this. She is not only a supreme master of the manoeuvres which the comic artist needs to maintain his poise. For all her clear-sighted, relentless observation of folly, her love of the ridiculous, her delight in the absurd, she is perfectly aware of pain and suffering, of the complexity of human experience, of the impossibility of contriving neat solutions to problems

of human conduct. Like all great comic artists she is under no illusion about the unresolved conflicts, the imperfection of life.

Of her six completed novels, all of which are technically comedies, in that they move towards the happy ending, three; **Northanger Abbey**, **Pride and Prejudice** and **Emma** are true comedies, perfect in their management of character and circumstance towards a determined end. The other three; **Sense and Sensibility**, **Mansfield Park** and **Persuasion** are shadowed by a sense of greater confusion and complexity. They are novels in which a dilemma is eventually solved but in which the strongest emotional emphasis of the book is on the problem rather than on its solution. The heroines of these three works are very different in temper from naïve impulse Catherine Morland, brilliant Elizabeth Bennet, and maddening but inevitably triumphant Emma. Elinor and Marianne Dashwood, Fanny Price and Anne Elliot are all, at some stage in their story, victims, at the mercy of other people's stupidity, or cruelty, or whim, or misunderstanding. And it is their characters which determine the tone of the books in which they appear. This is equally true of the three other works, where the happy innocence or the confident gaiety of the heroines sustains the continuous note of comedy. In the earliest, **Northanger Abbey**, another voice, that of the author herself intrudes so often as almost to qualify as a character, and her ironic witty commentary controls our reaction the whole way through. But the more subdued tone of **Sense and Sensibility** and **Mansfield Park** is underlined by the principal male characters. They are a deliberately contrived contrast; Willoughby and Henry Crawford represent vice and vivacity on the losing side; Edward Ferrars and Edmund Bertram are low-spirits and respectability on the winning side. Both Edward and Edmund are, however, victims too - the prey of designing women - for a good deal of the time. And there are no welcome deus-ex-machina figures, no typical comic counsellor to set things to rights for them. The Dashwood sisters are surrounded by hopeless relatives and friends - an amiable but unintelligent mother, a mean brother and sister-in-law, the foolish social Middletons, vulgar, stupid, good-natured Mrs. Jennings. Fanny Price is likewise at the mercy of one stupid indolent aunt and one overbearing and tyrannical, a severe though well-meaning uncle and selfish frivolous cousins. Nobody waves a wand for them to organise the final transformation scene; they must blunder along working things out for themselves learning by their own experience. Where Catherine Morland has the Tilney brother and sister and her sensible family, Elizabeth her clever friend Charlotte, an adoring sister, a witty father and the admirable Gardiners, and Emma her watchful advisor, Mr. Knightly, they can only look to lovers who themselves are deceived or distraught. Inevitably their experience, from the start, is an unhappy one, and it is in the novels in which these characters occur that Jane Austen indicates most clearly her sense of the conditions that

exist outside the happy world of comedy. That she can also take account of these conditions and mould them into the perfect form of her greatest comic works, I hope to show later.

It would be impossible to discuss all Jane Austen's novels in the time we have today, so, to illustrate the points I have been making I should like to concentrate most on the three earlier books. Even in *Northanger Abbey*, that lively satiric first work, she demonstrates her unique sense of values and her wide range of imagination. She had begun *Pride and Prejudice* before this book, as 'First Impressions,' a tale of a young woman launching out into life and deceived by her confident first judgements. It is a familiar theme in 18th century novels - the trials of an introduction to society, adult life and husband-hunting. But in *Northanger Abbey* the spontaneous impulsive innocence of Catherine, prevents her from being aware even that this is what she is about. She simply and naively falls in love with Henry Tilney and makes no attempt to disguise it, as when she protests that if only John Thorpe had stopped his curricule when she saw the Tilneys in the street "I would have jumped out and run after you." "Is there a Henry in the world who could be insensible to such a declaration?" Jane Austen comments. And who could fail to share hers and her hero's pleasure in Catherine, surely one of the most original and delightful heroines in fiction - artless but never stupid, embarrassed but never awkward, and with those natural kindly good manners Jane Austen loved to exhibit in contrast to the artificial sort. What could be more disarming than her sad response to Elinor Tilney's embarrassed explanation of the General's decision to turn Catherine out on pretence of a sudden engagement :

"Do not be unhappy, Elinor. An engagement, you know, must be kept.

That natural sense of propriety which Jane Austen so valued and which is one of the main stays of true comic poise, is nowhere so refreshingly displayed as in this version of the old traditional figure of the country hoyden - the girl who will make "a sad, heedless housekeeper" as her mother warns Tilney, but who possesses that irresistible impulsive warmth which gets her into fewer difficulties than it rescues her from. Here at the very beginning of her published work, Jane Austen betrays one of her most consistent comic principles - that virtue consists in generosity, high-spirited honesty, determination and a warm heart. Catherine has to learn the lessons of reason, but more important is her original nature : she knows instinctively what is right ; however wild her suspicions of the General she is right to distrust his character. Isabella deceives her, but not for long.

The same ardent nature is depicted in Marianne Dashwood. But Marianne's fate is already determined by the theme of the book - *Sense and Sensibility*. The form is comic, but the theme is a debate.

and though Jane Austen has no doubts as to the outcome - the comic spirit is always for reason as against romantic enthusiasm - though she concedes that rational affection, self-control and not expecting too much of life make for happiness, she offers no crude and simple decisions, she does not ignore the claims of the other side of the argument. How often in the progress of the novel do the comments of the characters, the course of the action, and the author's own attitude indicate that Jane Austen was finely aware of the razor-thin edge which separates folly from tragedy, and foolish passion from truth.

Marianne's first impressions deceive her, and there is no one to come to the rescue. But that she must suffer makes us love her more. What Colonel Brandon says at the very beginning when discussing with Elinor Marianne's contemptuous dismissal of the possibility of second love or marriage is a good example of how Jane Austen is never content with the simple answer. Elinor says:

"A few years will settle her opinions on the reasonable basis of common sense and observation. . ."

"This will probably be the case," he replied, "and yet there is something so amiable in the prejudices of a young mind that one is sorry to see them give way to the reception of more general opinions."

We like Colonel Brandon the more for feeling this; we like Elinor the less for her priggish reply:

"I cannot agree with you there. There are inconveniences attending such feelings as Marianne's which all the charms of enthusiasm and ignorance of the world cannot atone for."

So there are, but to be susceptible to all the charms of enthusiasm is what we like in people, and what we admire in the imagination of the novelist. It is a small touch, easily overlooked, but Jane Austen, like all great writers, demands very close and attentive reading. It betrays the author's width of range, her flexibility of imagination.

Marianne's suffering is more intensely depicted than anything else in any of her novels, as at the ball where she goes up to Willoughby, regardless of appearances and exclaims "Will you not shake hands with me?" When she hands over to Elinor his unbelievable letter and "covering her face with her handkerchief almost screamed in agony" she reduces even her well-balanced sister to tears. Her final recovery, her eventual marriage to Colonel Brandon are just saved for us from the uneasy sense of disappointment and deprivation by Jane Austen's imaginative sympathy with this passionate temperament: "Marianne could never love by halves; and her whole heart became, in time, as much devoted to her husband as it had once been to Willoughby."

But there is more than this in the novel to prove that Jane Austen refused the cut and dried alternatives that her title suggests. The most surprising thing in the book is that it is Elinor who is

eventually softened by Willoughby. The vicious young man, coming to justify his actions, plead forgiveness and confess his lasting love for Marianne (quite unforgiveably as she reminds him, since he is now married), completely overcomes Elinor's sense and rouses her sensibility. She finds him in his passionate self-blame as attractive as her sister did :

"Willoughby - he whom only half an hour ago she had abhorred as the most worthless of men - Willoughby in spite of all his faults, excited a degree of commiseration for the sufferings produced by them which made her think of him as now separated for ever from her family with a tenderness, a regret rather in proportion, as she soon acknowledged within herself, to his wishes than to his merits. She felt that his influence over her mind was heightened by circumstances which ought not in reason to have weight ; by that person of uncommon attraction - that open, affectionate and lively manner which it was no merit to possess ; and by that still ardent love for Marianne which it was not even innocent to indulge. But she felt that it was so long, long before she could feel his influence less."

This is characteristically realistic ; it is certainly no merit to possess charm and attraction. But Jane Austen well knew that even sense capitulates to them. And the effect of this response of Elinor's is very important in the book. It makes us aware of the extreme complexity of human relationships, the danger of making snap judgements ; finally it makes us unable to cast Willoughby in the role of straight villain.

Jane Austen has no villains. Her characters have faults ; in the case of Willoughby and Wickham grave ones. Mrs. Oliphant might well have shuddered at the list of Willoughby's crimes and the ease with which they are conceded and discussed. To trifle with Marianne's affections, to insult her, to marry purely for money are bad enough, but his seduction of Colonel Brandon's ward is yet more disgraceful. And how does Elinor take this ? She even allows his excuse :

"I do not mean to justify myself, but at the same time cannot leave you to suppose that I have nothing to urge - that because she was injured she was irreproachable ; and because I was a libertine she must be a saint. If the violence of her passion, the weakness of her understanding - I do not mean however, to defend myself. Her affection for me deserved better treatment, and I often, with great self-reproach, recall the tenderness which, for a very short time, had the power of creating any return."

So much for the Colonel's unfortunate ward; the matter is never referred to again. Once more the cool realism is apparent. It is a very masculine apology. We are left with the ambiguity which attends all such situations, and Jane Austen allows no convention to disguise it. The girl must be held equally responsible ; that weakness of understanding which of all faults was the one with which Jane Austen had least patience must be written down as blameable, just as much as Willoughby's selfishness. The same attitude is taken to Lydia's elopement in *Pride and Prejudice*. Wickham's

effrontery is more pleasing to the comic spirit than Lydia's empty stupidity. He is forgiven by Elizabeth as Willoughby is by Elinor. Indeed Jane Austen's morality is never protective. We recall Henry Tilney, the clergyman's brusque assessment of Catherine's fears for her brother's happiness while Isabella flirts with Captain Tilney :

"She spoke to Henry Tilney on the subject regretting his brother's evident partiality for Miss Thorpe and entreating him to make known her prior engagement.

"My brother does know," was Henry's answer.

"Does he? Then why does he stay here?"

He made no reply and was beginning to talk of something else, but she eagerly continued, "Why do not you persuade him to go away? The longer he stays the worse it will be for him at last. Pray advise him for his own sake, and for everybody's sake, to leave Bath directly. Absence will in time make him comfortable again, but he can have no hope here and is only staying to be miserable."

Henry smiled and said, "I am sure my brother would not wish to do that."

"Then you will persuade him to go away."

"Persuasion is not at my command ; but pardon me if I cannot even endeavour to persuade him. I have myself told him that Miss Thorpe is engaged. He knows what he is about and must be his own master."

"No he does not know what he is about," cried Catherine, "he does not know the pain he is giving my brother. Not that James has ever told me so, but I am sure he is very uncomfortable."

"And are you sure it is my brother's doing."

"Yes. Very sure."

"Is it my brother's attentions to Miss Thorpe or Miss Thorpe's admission of them that gives the pain?"

"Is it not the same thing?"

"I think Mr. Morland would acknowledge a difference. No man is offended by another man's admiration of the woman he loves ; it is the woman only who can make it a torment."

The morality is Johnsonian in its tough honesty, but it is, even here, more subtle, in the style of the truly creative genius. For while we accept Henry's judgement, we feel with Catherine's concern for her brother. The head goes with him, the heart with her, and Jane Austen acknowledges both.

Sense and Sensibility for all its fascinating insights into human conduct, human standards and human feelings is not an entirely successful novel. This is partly due to the comparative failure of the two main characters, Elinor and Edward. Who does not prefer Marianne and Willoughby? The preference is not so much rational as emotional and Jane Austen counters it by making Elinor not only admirable but amiable, especially in her love for her sister - a theme which appears often in her books. But what heroine in all good fiction talks quite so insufferably as Elinor? As the novel advances and her distresses humanise her we notice this less. The greater failure lies with Edward Ferrars. He and Colonel Brandon are a melancholy pair, both marked with an air of genteel des-

peration, and Jane Austen is conspicuously unsuccessful in making melancholy men tolerable. It is a difficult task. Perhaps no one but the creator of Hamlet has succeeded in making a melancholic irresistably attractive, but Hamlet seems less low-spirited than intense and sceptical, whereas Edward is always slightly below-par and the Colonel seems a good twenty years older than his age of thirty five. It is hard to predict much vital happiness for the Dashwood sisters, and the affectionate comfort to which they are destined is somehow not enough for the more exacting spirit of comedy. In a book which so subtly refuses to allow us to make glib generalisations, which admits Marianne's charm and goodness as well as her folly, Willoughby's real attractions as well as his viciousness, which grants vulgar, stupid Mrs. Jennings a useless but genuine kindness, and even the Palmers their practical value, such a conclusion, however predictable, comes as an anti-climax.

In **Pride and Prejudice** Jane Austen solved these difficulties and found a way to combine the brilliant high spirits of **Northanger Abbey** with the subtleties of **Sense and Sensibility**. It shares with **Emma** the claim to be considered her greatest comedy. So many of those sharp observations, those cool comments on men and manners which the author spoke in her own voice in the earlier works are here dramatically embodied in character and dialogue. The illusion of reality is complete. Of Mrs. Bennet, for instance, we learn early and briefly "she was a woman of mean understanding, little information and uncertain temper. When she was discontented she fancied herself nervous. The business of her life was to get her daughters married ; its solace was visiting and news." This and no more. But this unfortunate specimen of female triviality - the last of quite a line of such figures in the early novels - is pressed into the service of the comedy. She is never forgiven her follies ; she gains no self-knowledge ; she never improves, but her function is to provide at critical moments in the plot the comic relief which gives us the pleasure of anticipating and being delightedly satisfied by her endlessly repetitive variations on the one theme of daughters and marriage. Like Mr. Collins, she is one of the all-important static comic figures whose predictable reactions - like a clown who always stumbles at the same point, are funny in themselves, and an essential means of emphasising and under-lining critical moments in the plot. Her ridiculous behaviour when calling at Netherfield (the occasion when she turns on Mr. Darcy, misunderstanding his complaint of monotony in the country with the splendid line "I assure you, there is quite as much of **that** going on in the country as in town") almost precipitates a tragedy, for it encourages Darcy to turn Bingley against marriage into such a family. Her response to Lydia's marriage, again comic in itself, underlines the reason for Elizabeth's understandable shame at her family's stupidity and triviality ; but with the majestic consistency of the great comic figure, she is the occasion at the end for a small reversal

which mirrors the great reversal which is always the climax of comedy - the change from ill to good fortune. Elizabeth breaks the news of her engagement to her ; this for once is totally unexpected ; so great is the shock that silence, not the usual clamour greets it, then the flood of classic comic speech pours out as Elizabeth, her least favourite daughter, is suddenly raised to the status of her dearest :

“She began at length to recover, to fidget about in her chair, get up, sit down again, wonder and bless herself.

“Good Gracious ! Lord bless me ! only think ! dear me ! Mr. Darcy ! Lizzy how rich and how great you will be ! What pin money, what jewels, what carriages you will have ! Jane’s is nothing to it - nothing at all. I am so pleased - so happy. Such a charming man ! so handsome, so tall. O my dear Lizzy, pray apologise for my having disliked him so much before. I hope he will over-look it. Dear, dear Lizzy. A house in town ! Everything that is charming ! Three daughters married ! Ten thousand a year ! O Lord ! what will become of me ? I shall go distracted.”

It is a great theatrical moment. The essential convention of the happy ending is never more brilliantly demonstrated than here; no one has been punished - only left to their own devices as in the case of Wickham and Lydia ; everyone is satisfied, and not the least, according to her own dim lights, Mrs. Bennet.

Yet the old realism remains. We enjoy Mrs. Bennet as a comic figure, not as a person. So too with Mr. Collins ; we are never allowed to forget that he is, as Elizabeth declares “a conceited, pompous, narrow-minded, silly man.” One of the most interesting oblique angles of the book is the marriage of Mr. Collins and Charlotte Lucas - not so much an expected comic reversal after his rejection by Elizabeth, but a means of heightening our respect for the heroine herself. Jane Austen is infinitely skilful in drawing us to Elizabeth, not only for her gaiety and wit, but for that quality of imaginative response, impulsive decision and honesty that, as we have seen, were to her among the most important of all values.

I have mentioned before how carefully Elizabeth is surrounded by a supporting cast of the intelligent, the loving and the witty - Charlotte her friend, Jane her sister, and her father. But Charlotte’s shortcomings are first exposed, Jane is an occasion for her wit as well as her affection and in her universal good humour acts as an admirable foil to the sharp perceptions of her sister, and Elizabeth’s relationship with her father the most important conjunction in the book except for her final union with Darcy again throws into relief the heroine’s superiority. Yet all these relationships, though their technical function is so perfectly contrived, grow or decline with that quiet persuasive realism we recognise as being Jane Austen’s peculiar gift.

First of all Charlotte. She is wise and witty ; in the early part of the book she and Elizabeth exchange ironic commentaries on



“ Mrs. Bennet sat quite still, and unable to utter a syllable.”

From the original illustration by Hugh Thomson for ‘Pride and Prejudice’,
published by George Allen in 1894, and now at Jane Austen’s House

people and life. She is right about the dangers of Jane's general good humour and apparent reserve with Bingley. One of her remarks would have come well from the author's lips, and Elizabeth remembers its justice when Darcy tells her that from Jane's manner he could not believe she loved Bingley :

"If a woman conceals her affection with the same skill from the object of it, she may lose the opportunity of fixing him ; and it will then be but poor consolation to believe the world equally in the dark. There is so much of gratitude or vanity in almost every attachment, that it is not safe to leave any to itself."

But it is the same Charlotte who acts according to reason rather than the heart and makes a prudent match with the impossible Collins. Elizabeth is jolted by it. Her own wit, we realise, is not a matter of sense and reason ; it is the product of high spirits and impulse. She is the last person to be persuaded that a marriage of convenience to a fool is an acceptable arrangement, however it may appear in the world's eyes. Jane puts the pleasant social view of it : "Consider Mr. Collin's respectability and Charlotte's prudent steady temper. She may feel something like regard and esteem for our cousin." Elizabeth replies hotly - "were I to be persuaded that Charlotte had any regard for him, I should only think worse of her understanding than I now do of her heart."

Nevertheless, when she visits the Collinses, Elizabeth finds herself gradually adjusting to this new situation, able, even to enjoy Charlotte's company as of old while still sympathising with what she must endure. One of her observations particularly shook Mrs. Oliphant :

"When Mr. Collins could be forgotten there was really a great air of comfort throughout, and by Charlotte's evident enjoyment of it, Elizabeth supposed he must often be forgotten."

But original revulsion and subsequent acceptance is a familiar pattern in Jane Austen. A similar ability to comprehend at the same time worldly convention and the more complex private response is shown in Elizabeth's dubious and serious reaction to Lydia's marriage. That it is essential for the family's and Lydia's good name she accepts; but her moral sense recoils at the prospect of it. When she talks to her father about Mr. Gardiner's letter the different nature of each is revealed. It is a particularly fine scene :

"But" said Elizabeth, "the terms, I suppose, must be complied with."
Complied with ! I am only ashamed of his asking so little."

"And they **must** marry ? Yet he is **such** a man !"

"Yes, yes, they must marry. There is nothing else to be done. But there are two things that I want very much to know - one is how much money your uncle had laid down to bring it about ; the other, how I am ever to pay him."

"Money ! my uncle !" cried Jane. "What do you mean, sir?"

"I mean that no man in his senses would marry Lydia on so slight a temptation as one hundred a year during my life, and fifty after I am gone."

"That is very true," said Elizabeth, "though it had not occurred to me before. His debts to be discharged and something still to remain ! O it must be my uncle's doing. Generous, good man ! I am afraid he has distressed himself. A small sum could not do all this."

"No," said her father. "Wickham's a fool if he takes her with a farthing less than ten thousand pounds. I should be sorry to think so ill of him in the very beginning of our relationship." . . .

"And they are really to be married," cried Elizabeth as soon as they were by themselves. "How strange this is ! And for this we are to be thankful. That they should marry, small as is their chance of happiness, and wretched as is his character, we are forced to rejoice. O Lydia !"

How well this little scene reveals the impulsive, warm honesty of Elizabeth, the ironic, clear honesty of her father, and the close relationship between them. Jane is at sea ; it is Elizabeth who instantly picks up her father's wry point. And while she is impulsively thanking their supposed benefactor, he is making one of those brilliantly ruthless observations that Jane Austen herself as author delighted in ; again with perfect consistency his tone of acquiescent irony asserts itself. But Elizabeth sees the tragi-comic implications of the shabby, familiar little situation. From her character the subtle views of her author are beautifully refracted.

Elizabeth's relation with her father is the comic backbone of the book ; in determining the tone, in combining realism, morality and laughter it is all-important. Mr. Bennet is Jaques to Elizabeth's Rosalind ; they perfectly understand and perfectly compliment each other. In the course of the novel Mr. Bennet is rebuked by the author for his irresponsibility ; we are not allowed to forget, as Elizabeth herself points out, that had he exerted himself to control his children, had he not so enjoyed making fun of them and of his wife, the disaster might not have happened. And had Mr. Bennet not fallen a victim to that peculiarly male folly as Jane Austen thought it - marrying a pretty, stupid woman - well, the story of course would never have happened. That remark is not so meaningless as it sounds at first. As a man Mr. Bennet has faults, as a figure in the book he is faultless, second only to his daughter ; he helps to hold it together by his commentary and the quality he shares with his author of relentless, clear-sighted realism. The ironic spirit is not always socially constructive - not even always socially acceptable. But it is one of the mainstays of comedy. The bond between Elizabeth and her father allows us to love him on the naturalistic level ; her superiority of instinctive judgement (as when she warns him how foolish it is to let Lydia go to Brighton) raises her, without reducing him. For his forte is not action or decision ; it is commentary. He has all the best lines in the book. "Can he be a sensible man?" Elizabeth enquires of Mr. Collins after hearing his letter of introduction. "No my dear. I think not. I have great hopes of finding him quite the reverse." So has the reader. With Elizabeth Mr. Bennet shares the supreme comic gift of dearly loving a fool. His remarks after Mr. Collins's proposal

increase our enjoyment of Mrs. Bennet's inspired idiocy :

"I have not the pleasure of understanding you. Of what are you talking?"

"Of Mr. Collins and Lizzy. Lizzy declares she will not have Mr. Collins, and Mr. Collins begins to say he will not have Lizzy."

"And what am I to do on this occasion? It seems a hopeless business."

Everyone remembers how he does manage it :

"An unhappy alternative is before you, Elizabeth. From this day you must be a stranger to one of your parents. Your mother will never see you again if you do not marry Mr. Collins and I will never see you again if you do."

Elizabeth could not help smiling."

They form a confederacy of wit. When her father congratulates Jane on being crossed in love and exhorts Elizabeth to imitate her:

"Now is your time. Here are officers enough at Meryton to disappoint all the young ladies in the country. Let Wickham be your man.

He is a pleasant fellow and would jilt you creditably."

she picks up his tone to reply

"Thank you sir, but a less agreeable man would satisfy me. We must not all expect Jane's good fortune."

"True," said Mr. Bennet, "but it is a comfort to think that whatever of that kind might befall you, you have an affectionate mother who will always make the most of it."

Even when he admits his responsibility and his fault, he has that conscious consistency of tone which, when unconscious as in Mrs. Bennet and Mr. Collins, is, as we have seen, one of the main sources of laughter, but in his case acts as a protection against our disapproval or disappointment. Mr. Bennet is with the immortals ; things may change, he may put a foot wrong, but his dry honesty, his ability to prick the bubble of human pretension goes on forever:

"You must not be too severe upon yourself," said Elizabeth.

"You may well warn me against such an evil. Human nature is so prone to fall into it ! No Lizzy, let me once in my life feel how much I have been to blame. I am not afraid of being over-powered by the impression. It will pass away soon enough. . ."

Then after a short pause he continued, "Lizzy, I bear you no ill will for being justified in your advice to me last May which, considering the event, shows some greatness of mind."

This assurance of tone and character enables Jane Austen to use Mr. Bennet for one of the most original strokes in fiction. His search for an erring daughter is a convention of the novels of the time - but with what a difference she uses it ! Here is no Vicar of Wakefield searching for his lost lamb. And when the lost lamb comes home, in all her moral idiocy, to justify his estimation of her, she is utterly unchanged, unrepentant, wondering what all the fuss is about. It is noticeable in this novel that the only characters who change at all in the course of it are the hero and heroine. Everyone else remains eternally fixed, the fools and the wise, the

loving and the heartless, performing their arabesques at the author's will. But at the centre of the dance, Elizabeth and Darcy move to their own measure ; he changes, she develops. It gives them the stature they need to form the perfect pattern of comedy. They are more complex characters, intricate characters who, as Elizabeth herself says are the most amusing - the most interesting.

Elizabeth's own intricacy which, as we have seen, is hinted at and displayed throughout the work, from her reaction to Darcy, her feeling at Charlotte's wedding, her horror at Lydia's, is finally revealed with all that warmth of nature, that impulsive passionate heart which Jane Austen so conspicuously admired, above even sense and reason. It is with her father, significantly enough, when he has received Darcy's request for her hand. When Jane is astonished at her news and asks how long she has loved Darcy she replies in the old witty way :

"It has been coming on so gradually that I hardly know when it began, but I believe I must date it from my first seeing his beautiful grounds at Pemberley."

But to her father's characteristic remark : "We all know him to be a proud unpleasant sort of man, but this would be nothing if you really liked him," she bursts out

"I do, I do like him" (with tears in her eyes) "I love him. Indeed he has no improper pride. He is perfectly amiable. You do not know what he really is ; then pray do not pain me by speaking of him in such terms."

Elizabeth's life-long partnership in wit with her father is for a second broken ; with her partner in ridicule we see her for the first time in all her full sincerity. It is a brilliant and moving moment ; it emphasises both their trust in each other and their difference from each other.

Elizabeth Bennet combines in herself those qualities of Jane Austen's imagination that I have been trying to illustrate in this talk. She is clear-sighted but susceptible to charm ; she accepts both sense and sensibility ; she can forgive herself, and with that greatest of all comic virtues, magnanimity, she can forgive others for being what they are while still retaining her clear knowledge of them. She who had said early in the book to Darcy "who was not to be laughed at" "it would be a great loss to me to have many such acquaintance. I dearly love a laugh," derives from her laughter not resentment or indignation, but a generous enjoyment. This is no where better seen than in the charming passage describing her last meeting with Wickham.

"I am afraid I interrupt your solitary ramble, my dear sister ?" said he as he joined her.

"You certainly do," she replied with a smile. "but it does not follow that the interruption must be unwelcome."

They continue parrying each others remarks, he trying to dis-

cover how much she knows, she revealing it only obliquely, until everything is clear between them ; it is a sort of witty fencing that restores her pleasure in his company.

"They were now almost at the door of the house, for she had walked fast to get rid of him, and unwilling for her sister's sake to provoke him she only said in reply with a good humoured smile, "Come Mr. Wickham, we are brother and sister, you know. Do not let us quarrel about the past. In future I hope we shall always be of one mind."

She held out her hand ; he kissed it with affectionate gallantry though he hardly knew how to look, and they entered the house."

So the only conspicuous rogue in the book is dismissed - not to happiness, but to his deserts, a silly wife. In Jane Austen's works it is a fate as common as it is severe. But it can be endured. Wickham's irreducible effrontery which delights Mr. Bennet and even softens Elizabeth is another comic instance of the consistency that can rouse laughter and create ironic acquiescence in the conditions of life. The heroine, with all the courage of the comic spirit, acknowledges him as brother and accepts him as she accepts her foolish mother, her silly sisters, herself with all her fascinating contradictions. So too comedy teaches us to come to terms with life not in a mood of sombre resignation, but in the high spirited recognition that life's inconsistencies and absurdities, its imperfections, its dangers and disappointments are not denied or concealed by the spirit of laughter and enjoyment. But this needs a peculiar poise, the blending of those qualities I have tried to show in Jane Austen's earlier works, hard clear vision, complete honesty, and the delighted play of the imagination over all of it in a spirit of spontaneous pleasure which itself is a kind of love. If Jane Austen's comic vision is relentless - and I hope I have shown it is, relentless in its honesty and subtle penetration, it is relentless like sunshine, brilliant, clear, all-exposing, but at the same time warm and life-giving.

THE JANE AUSTEN SOCIETY

Report for the Year, 1971



Pocket Watch, once owned by Edward (Austen) Knight,
now in the possession of Mrs. Rupert Shervington.

THE JANE AUSTEN SOCIETY

(FOUNDED IN 1940 BY DOROTHY G. DARNELL)

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The Lord David Cecil, C.H.

Vice-President :

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Sir Hugh Smiley, Bt.

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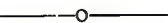
Francis E. Carpenter, Esq.; Thomas F. Carpenter, Esq.;

Arthur J. Clarke, Esq.; Miss Elizabeth Jenkins ;

Sir Hugh Smiley, Bt.

THE JANE AUSTEN SOCIETY

Report for the year 1971



Membership

There were 88 new members during the year, of whom five became Life Members. Two old members became Life Members, and four institutions became members. Total membership now stands at 1305. We are pleased to say that the increase in subscriptions has not caused a drop in the number of members, although there are fewer new Life Members.

Members are reminded that subscriptions are due on January 1st, and that this Report is the only reminder that they will receive. The Hon. Secretary would much appreciate prompt payment of the 50p Annual Subscription, and will gladly provide a Banker's Order Form.

Annual General Meeting

The Annual General Meeting was held at Chawton House, by permission of Major and Mrs. Edward Knight, on Saturday, 17th July. About 270 members and 150 guests were present. Lord David Cecil presided.

The minutes of the last Annual Meeting, having been printed in the Annual Report, were taken as read.

The Hon. Secretary presented the Report for 1970, and, in the absence of the Hon. Treasurer, the accounts. These motions were seconded by Mrs. Denton, and carried.

Mr. Hugh Powell proposed that Lord David Cecil be re-elected President of the Society, that the Duke of Wellington and Mr. John Gore be re-elected Vice-Presidents, and that Sir Hugh Smiley, Bt., be re-elected Chairman.

This was seconded by Sir Charles Stirling, and carried.

The President proposed that the Committee be re-elected en bloc.

The meeting was addressed by Dr. Filippo Donini, Director of the Italian Institute in London, who spoke on "Jane Austen in Italy".

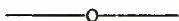
A vote of thanks was proposed by Lady (Edgar) Bonham Carter, seconded by Mrs. Barley, and carried.

The President closed the meeting by thanking Major and Mrs. Edward Knight for lending Chawton House once again for the meeting.

Annual General Meeting, 1972.

The Annual General Meeting will be held at Chawton House, by permission of Major and Mrs. Edward Knight, on Saturday 15th July.

The meeting will be addressed by Miss Rosalind Wade (Mrs. William Kean Seymour), who will speak on "The Anatomy of Jane Austen."



The Duke of Wellington, K. G.

Gerald, 7th Duke of Wellington was for many years President and at all times an invaluable supporter of our Society. His death at the age of 86 in January last is a great sorrow and a heavy loss to us all.

The third son of the 4th Duke, he was born in 1885 and succeeded to the title in 1943 on the death in action of his nephew. In a notice, of necessity short, his services to our Society must be our chief concern.

As Duke, he did good and appropriate public service as Lord Lieutenant, first of the County of London and then of Hampshire between 1944 and 1960; saved Apsley House from destruction and helped to perpetuate it as a national museum and was for many years a Trustee of the National Gallery. After a brief career in diplomacy, he turned to architecture and soon qualified F.R.I.B.A., being responsible for many interesting restorations and decorations, and buildings in the traditional Regency style: and he found time to write several books on various facets of the career of his great ancestor, whom he deeply admired.

He served with distinction in World War II.

At Stratfield Saye he rearranged and acquired an exact knowledge of the Great Duke's treasures and relics and was a meticulous guardian and an admirable showman, as well as a charming host.

In December, 1946, he was a signatory to the letter in the *Times* appealing for funds to buy Chawton Cottage as memorial and museum of Jane Austen, and three years later became President of our Society and so remained for 16 years. On retiring in 1965 he himself found and recruited for us an ideal successor Lord David Cecil.

He rarely failed to preside at the Annual Meetings, when his suavity, humour and efficient handling of the formal business always afforded a pleasant prelude to the address. He usually brought with him from Stratfield Saye a party of enthusiasts

which sometimes included the Lecturer, and on occasion himself gave an address. At all times his advice and expertise were readily available to the Committee and his wide experience helped to solve its problems and guide its policy.

Of the Society he was not only a strong and valuable supporter ; he was a great attraction to our audiences from all over the world.

The Jane Austen Society owes him a great debt of gratitude for his long and faithful service.

John Gore.

Chawton is Quiet Again

The construction of the Alton by-pass has restored to Chawton the quiet of long ago. The by-pass now severs the Alton-Chawton road, and has created a dead end to the south of the entrance to Chawton House. But if motorists follow the Chawton signposts from any direction they will get there.

Jane Austen on Women's Liberation ?

As to pitying a young woman merely because she cannot live in two places at the same time, and at once enjoy the comforts of being married and single, I shall not attempt it.

Jane Austen to Cassandra Austen, Feb : 8th, 1807.

Jane Austen's Music Books

Dr. Filippo Donini in his interesting address to our society last July, gently chided Jane for never mentioning opera in any of her novels ; and especially of course Italian opera. He made it clear that no Italian could take to a foreign author wholeheartedly under such adverse conditions.

But may I refer Dr. Donini to Jane's music books, of which there are several with her own signature on the fly-leaf, in which Italian works and opera overtures, and also songs, are well represented.

First is a volume bound in about 1800, being a collection of

Italian, French and English works, all for quite an accomplished player of the harpsichord or pianoforte. Of these works The Favorite Overture to 'La Buona Figliuola' was composed in 1778 by Nicola Piccini and adapted for two players by Thomas Carter. He arranged a number of works around this time, until he found that Mr. Handel's compositions were more in demand than his own; "so, being well acquainted with Mr. Handel's manuscript, he procured an old skin of parchment which he prepared carefully and wrote in Mr. Handel's style so well that he deceived a music-seller, who gave 20 guineas for it. and the piece passes this day. amongst many, for a genuine production of Handel".

Next in her music book comes a series of five charming Italian opera overtures, adapted for the harpsichord (or pianoforte) and violin by Signor Ferdinand Bertoni.

No. 1 'Medonte'. Composed by F. Nertoni himself, who wrote a number of operas while living in London. as well as in Italy.

No. 2 'Convito' (Composer unknown).

No. 3 'Trionfo', a very charming tuneful one. also by an unknown author.

No. 4 Piccini's 'Viaggiatori Felui' (The Happy Journey).

No. 5 'Erea Lavinia' by Antonio Sacchini, who was born in Naples, but composed in London between 1772 and 1784.

Also in this book is a dashing 'Duetto' by Guiseppe Giordani, who spent most of his working life in London, about whom it was unkindly said that he composed a great deal of music none of which was his own! Nevertheless, this duet is very pleasant to play.

In an earlier song book dated 1778, which Jane must have known all her life, a large number of the songs are handwritten - some in Italian of which several are three pages long. and others in French. Obviously the Austen family were perfectly happy singing in all three languages. Of course they had received an excellent education from their father. Can it be said of many families nowadays that they would sing in three languages for pleasure?

Next come several French songs, and lastly a group of light Italian songs by Johann Naumann who studied in Italy, and composed operas in Italian, and died in 1801.

In another of her song books, in which most songs are accompanied by the guitar, is 'The Song of the Sicilian Mariners', sung in Italian. Incidentally 'Sicilian Mariners' is also a hymn tune, still occasionally used today, and first used as such in about 1800, which probably derived from a folk melody.

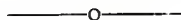
Also in this book is a song from 'Euridici' composed during

Gluck's first Italian period (he afterwards lived in Paris and composed many French operas). This song was sung in Italian at the Theatre Royal, Covent Garden, by Signor Tenducci.

After this song comes one by Dominico Corri, who came to London in 1774 and published three volumes of English songs with original accompaniments.

At the end of this music book, there is a fascinating 'List of Subscribers,' including the names 'Willoughby, Wickham and Woodhouse'. It would be thrilling to think that this particular music book gave Jane inspiration in more ways than one.

Diana Shervington.



New Exhibits

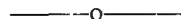
Lady Knatchbull-Hugessen has given to the Society the original drawing by Cassandra Austen of Fanny Knight, later Lady Knatchbull, and grandmother of the late Sir Hughe Knatchbull-Hugessen, K.C.M.G., who gave a photograph of the drawing in 1954.

Mr. Lawrence E. Impey has loaned to the museum the chair illustrated in this report. The chair was in Chawton Cottage in Jane Austen's day, and came to Mr. Impey through his mother's brother, Mr. R. A. Austen-Leigh, great-grandson of the Rev. James Austen, Jane Austen's eldest brother.

Also on view are a number of the original Hugh Thompson water colour illustrations to some of Jane Austen's novels, formerly in the possession of the late Mr. T. Edward Carpenter.

The photographic record of all the houses in Bath occupied by the Austen family at one time or another has been made complete by photographs given by Mrs. Jean Freeman.

Miss Susan Radcliffe has presented two documents, the original manuscript of the Statement of Mrs. Elizabeth Austen, widow of John Austen of Broadford, Kent, which is endorsed "Memorandums for mine and my Children's reading, being my own tho'ts on our affairs 1706, 1707, a rough draft in a retired hour"; and her accounts from Michaelmas 1704 to Michaelmas 1705. The Statement is transcribed in full in *Austen Papers*, edited by R. A. Austen-Leigh, and he refers to the accounts.



Robert Martin and the Agricultural Reports

A side of Emma Woodhouse's character is amusingly re-



vealed when she is questioning Harriet Smith about Robert Martin. 'He does not read?', she enquires, with more of assertion than enquiry. But Harriet's answer is not what she expects, for Robert Martin does read, and Harriet names the **Vicar of Wakefield the Agricultural Reports** and the **Elegant Extracts**. Emma says nothing to this. Yet, at the very least, she must have been more than a little put out by the discovery that the Martins and the Woodhouses have one book in common, the **Elegant Extracts**, a best-selling anthology of 'useful and entertaining pieces of poetry' compiled by Vicesimus Knox and re-printed many times since its original appearance in 1789. In his edition of Jane Austen, Dr. Chapman identifies this work; and of the **Agricultural Reports** (a title that does not exist in any of the standard bibliographies) he suggests that this may refer to the **General Review of the Agriculture of the County of Surrey** by William Stevenson. 1809 and 1813. I am able to confirm that Dr. Chapman's guess was accurate. Stevenson's book was one of a series of county volumes, sometimes advertized under the title of **Agricultural Reports** (or sometimes, **Agricultural Surveys**).

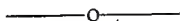
The confirmation of Dr. Chapman's guess is a trivial point. But it serves to remind us of the care with which Jane Austen presented Robert Martin to her readers as a young farmer bang up-to-date with his professional reading (remembering that **Emma** was published only three years after the recent edition of the Surrey volume). And Jane Austen's 1816 audience would have been keenly interested in Robert Martin's progress, since they could, Emma-like, either regard him as a vulgar, unworthy, ungentlemanly upstart, with ambitions far above his class and station in life, or, alternatively, as does George Knightley, they could look upon him with a kind and welcoming eye, tolerant of his ambitions as a successful yeoman-farmer. He belongs to the new breed of farmers, scientifically-orientated, agriculturally informed, ready to explore the latest techniques of cropping and cultivation and in this open-mindedness departing radically from the figure of the entrenched, parochial, do-as-my-fathers-did yokel-farmer. These were matters of current debate. The **Agricultural Reports** were themselves full of such comments on the stick-in-the mud and progressive styles of farming. Their authors deplored blind yokelism and campaigned for a scientific approach. The argument was sharpened by the need for Britain to be self-supporting in the event of a successful Napoleonic blockade. It was an argument urged nationally by the Board of Agriculture (set up in 1793) and sounded locally in the many town and regional agricultural societies which sprang up during this period.

In 1814-15, at the very time that Jane Austen was writing **Emma**, the agricultural debate was particularly heated. A lobby was forming, expressing the concern of farmers and the great farm-

ing landowners on a number of related issues : the fall in the price of farm produce, the method of assessing the farmer's taxability on his rents, and the threat of imported wheat to home corn, now that imports could enter freely with the end of the wars with Napoleon and the United States. In the first three months of 1815 there were no less than 143 Parliamentary petitions from up and down the country, on the question of protection against imported wheat.

These issues are not directly present in *Emma*. But they certainly were in the minds of *Emma's* readers ; and when they met Robert Martin they were encountering a contemporary figure. They would see him for what he is : a representative of a strand of the new middle-classes, not the commercial or industrial or professional *nouveaux*, but the yeoman-farmer, who was to rise through his own exertions, abilities and ambitions, into the ranks of the gentry, and who was destined, at some uncertain point in the future, to take over the fixed and stagnant domain of Mr. Woodhouse. This was the silent, bloodless revolution going on all around Jane Austen ; the weakened embrace of the Georgian world now giving way to the energies of the nineteenth-century. This is what we understand in the marriage of Emma and Mr. Knightley and in the pages of Robert Martin's book.

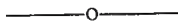
Brian Southam.



Jane Austen in Bath

Copies of Jane Austen in Bath, by Jean Freeman, can be obtained from : The Selborne Bookshop, Selborne, Alton, Hampshire.

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Collected Reports of the Jane Austen Society 1949 - 1965

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JANE AUSTEN IN ITALY

Address given by Dr. Filippo Donini at the Annual General Meeting

How delighted I am for this opportunity, and grateful to your Society for asking me... This gathering... prompts me to give you my first quotation from Jane Austen; "It was a sweet view, sweet to the eye and the mind. English verdure, English culture, English comfort, seen under a sun bright, without being oppressive."

My subject is **Jane Austen in Italy**, and as you are certainly all perfectly aware that Miss Austen never visited my country, it is obvious that my talk will be about the Italian attitude towards her work. In fact what I want to tell you is how and when her novels have been translated into Italian, what judgment the Italian critics have passed on them, and how the Italians in general like them.

I am afraid I cannot start by proclaiming proudly that the popularity of Jane Austen in Italy is very great. Honestly, on the contrary, and much to my regret, I have to admit that she is not popular at all. Perhaps some day the miracle that has made Galsworthy a household word in Italy will happen to Miss Austen too, if Italian Television will broadcast the BBC films derived from her novels, just as it is currently exposing my fellow countrymen to the Forsyte Saga, but for the present I am sorry to say she is not well known.

She does not compare at all with Dickens and Scott, who are the English novelists most widely read in Italy. Even uneducated Italians have heard about Walter Scott: the fact that he inspired Manzoni to write his famous historical novel **I promessi sposi**, and Donizetti to compose his opera **Lucia di Lammermoor** is very widely known, but, alas, no opera was ever derived from **Pride and Prejudice** or **Emma**. The very idea of Elinor Dashwood singing an aria to the accompaniment of Bellinian flutes or Verdian violins is unthinkable. Walter Scott's romantic heroines lend themselves much better to the task, and in fact not only Donizetti, but Pacini and even Rossini have provided the music.

Now, how can something which is the negation of opera be popular in Italy? And you have to admit that Jane Austen's art is anything but operatic. Moreover, her characters are very often the negation of what appeals to Italians, and sometimes they behave in a way that Italians cannot understand. Mary Crawford with her belief that "a large income is the best recipe for happiness", her unconditional respect and admiration for the rich and titled, can only inspire horror to the average Italian girl.

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who has obviously been trained to admire as the ultimate perfection the disinterested and democratic avowal of Gilda in *Rigoletto* : "Signor ne' principe - io lo vorrei - sento che povero - piu' l'amerei" (Neither wealthy nor a Prince I would like him to be. I feel that were he poor he would be dearer to me : you certainly remember the famous aria). Contrast this splendid declaration of independence of the heart with Emma's unctuous admonition to Harriet : "A young farmer, whether on horseback or on foot, is the very last sort of person to raise my curiosity. The yeomanry are precisely the order of people with whom I feel I can have nothing to do. A degree or two lower, and a creditable appearance might interest me ; I might hope to be useful to their families in some way or other..." : nothing could be more opposed to the Italian general belief that "al cuore non si comanda" (You cannot control your heart).

The same Emma's reaction, when Mr. Elton proposes to her, is one of great indignation : "he must know that in fortune and consequence she was greatly his superior...that the Woodhouses had been settled for several generations at Hartfield...and that **the Eltons were nobody**". Well, an Italian girl is more likely to take exception to the shape of Mr. Elton's nose or the fashion of his dress than to his family tree. And take the story of Catherine Morland, with all this fuss about her being too poor to marry Henry Tilney. When the Italian reader learns that in the General's eyes "she was guilty of being less rich than he had supposed her to be", he naturally conceives the greatest hatred for the abominable General, he expects Catherine and Henry to revolt openly against him, and if not to kill him, at least to elope in poverty and happiness, he cannot understand how on earth they can readily, meekly submit to his will. When the happy ending arrives, and Catherine and Henry **do** get married and rich, the Italian reader cannot but think them quite unworthy of their good luck : they have not done anything to deserve it ! (Of course the case is very different with Amina and Elvino in *La Sonnambula* : when the country squire arrives at the end to settle everything, we are delighted : they are so simpatici !)

But what Italian can sympathise with Anne Elliot who "with all her claims of birth, beauty and mind" so easily lets herself be persuaded by a mere Lady Russell that to "involve herself at **nineteen** in an engagement" with Captain Wentworth, whom she loves but who has "no fortune", "would be indeed a throwing away, which she grieved to think of !" At nineteen ! But **fifteen** was the age when an Italian girl considered herself ripe for elopement, even in the nineteenth century.

The only heroine of Jane Austen whom the Italians are ready to like and approve of, is that quintessence of sensibility, Marianne Dashwood, who, bless her, **does** fall in love at first sight with

Willoughby, and behaves irrationally and passionately enough to captivate our sympathy. When she meets Willoughby after a long separation at a ball in London, and, "her whole countenance glowing with sudden delight" moves towards him "pronouncing his name in a tone of affection" and "holding out her hand to him"; when she cries out, "betraying her feelings to everybody present" (in a very unenglish way): "Good God, Willoughby! What is the meaning of this? Have you not received my letters? Will you not shake hands with me?" she steals the Italian heart completely, we adore her, we are ready to burst into applause. Think of what Verdi would have done with this grand scene, what a tremendous duo for Maria Callas openly proclaiming her passion, with lacerating top notes and a great agitation of bosom, and an embarrassed Tito Gobbi in the role of Willoughby fingering his buttons and politely, soberly enquiring about Mrs. Dashwood's health!

But, alas, Marianne too lets us down in the end and behaves in a most unitalian way. I am referring of course to her marriage with Colonel Brandon, which is the weakest point in **Sense and Sensibility**. How could this passionate girl climb down from true love to "strong esteem and lively friendship", from dashing Willoughby to sedate, middle-aged Brandon? Verdi, I am sure, would have had Marianne kill herself in desperation, or at least die very early of consumption, like Violetta.

Perhaps, at this moment, I had better warn you that I have come to praise Jane Austen, not to bury her. I do indeed like and admire her work immensely, but as my task is to report about its success in Italy, honesty compels me to add a few more unflattering remarks. When Edmund, in **Mansfield Park**, charmingly encourages Fanny to be conscious of her beauty: "You must try not to mind growing up into a pretty woman", Fanny is utterly distressed: "oh, don't talk so, don't talk so!" she cries - and she sounds unbelievably ridiculous to the Italian reader. No Italian girl, I hope, minds growing up into a pretty woman: on the contrary they are only too anxious to grow as pretty as possible as soon as possible! The British have invented and still seem to enjoy the fable of Peter Pan, the dream of protracted childhood, but Peter Pan is unthinkable in Italy, where one of the most popular songs is "Non ho e'eta'", the complaint of the little girl for being "under age".

There is a moment in **Emma** when Mr. Knightley seems at last to rise to the expectation of the heroine - and of the Italian reader: "He took her hand; - whether she had not herself made the first motion, she could not say - she might, perhaps, have rather offered it - but he took her hand, pressed it, and certainly was on the point of carrying it to his lips - when, from some fancy or other, he suddenly let it go." Mr. Knightley would certainly

blush at the abuse that the Italians feel inclined to pour on him for being such an ass. Can you imagine, in Dante's famous story of Francesca da Rimini, Paolo controlling himself at the last moment and instead of kissing Francesca deciding, on second thoughts: "No, no, Madam, let us go on reading!" No second thoughts are possible under some circumstances, we feel. But the trouble with Jane Austen is that, with her, second thoughts always prevail. And so her scenes of flirtation become utterly unreal, as when Emma flirts with Frank Churchill and all her "friendly encouragement" consists of words. Mario Praz has something to say about this, as I shall tell you in a moment.

Another character whom the Italians are unlikely to accept is Edward Ferrars, of **Sense and Sensibility**. He too seems to us a perfect ass, with his childlike submission to his mother, his incredible shyness with Elinor, his absurd devotion to Lucy. By the way, how can he profess to have been genuinely in love with Lucy, when "the defect of the style" of her letters caused him so much irritation? The Italian lover does not mind the spelling of his love letters at all. And how ever can Edward and Elinor both admit that he has offended his mother, when forming the engagement that drew her anger on him? By Italian standards the offender was the mother! Just as, by our standards, the illegitimacy of Harriet, in **Emma**, should have endeared her to her lover, rather than offend him like a stain.

But all this is very little, in comparison with the two really major crimes of which Jane Austen, in the eyes of the Italians, is guilty. "Non le piacciono i bambini!" (She does not like children), as her treatment of the Middleton children in **Sense and Sensibility** and of the Musgrove children in **Persuasion** clearly indicates. And she has no respect for a bereaved mother: how can she make fun of Mrs. Musgrove's sorrow for her son's death? These are indeed unforgivable crimes.

Let us be frank, then, and admit that the Italians find Miss Austen uncongenial. Perhaps, after all, it is not surprising, and one might be tempted to mutter "serves her right", because there is no trace, in her work, of any sympathy for Italy and the Italians.

The image she has of Italy derives from the conventional tradition of the Gothic novel. "Oh! that we had such weather here as they had at Udolpho, or at least in Tuscany or the South of France" cries out Catherine Morland when it rains in Bath, and later on she mentions Italy along with Switzerland and the South of France as "fruitful in horrors". Fanny's room at Mansfield Park is decorated with "three transparencies, made in a rage of transparencies, for the three lower panes of one window, where Tintern Abbey held its station between a cave in Italy and a moonlight lake, in Cumberland."

According to her nephew, J. E. Austen-Leigh, Miss Austen

"read French with facility and knew something of Italian." The evidence of this knowledge is very scanty: the words **Mama** and **mamma** occur occasionally in **Sense and Sensibility** and **Pride and Prejudice**, and "caro sposo" three times in **Emma**. Italian songs are played by Miss Bingley and by Jane Fairfax but Harriet declares: "I hate Italian songs. There is no understanding of a word of it". I am afraid the understanding of Italian songs by Miss Austen was not much greater, since she contrasts them rather unflatteringly to more familiar themes: "After playing some Italian songs, Miss Bingley varied the charm by a lively Scotch air."

There is a passage, however, in **Persuasion**, where an Italian song has a decisive importance. It is when Anne, at a concert in Bath, "explains the words of the song to Mr. Elliot": "This, said she, is nearly the sense, or rather the meaning, of the words, for certainly the sense of an Italian love-song must not be talked of, (I'm afraid she was right), - but is as nearly the meaning as I can give; for I do not pretend to understand the language. I am a very poor Italian scholar." To which Mr. Elliot replies that on the contrary she must be a very good one, since she can "translate at sight these inverted, transposed, curtailed Italian lines": and Captain Wentworth who watches this animated conversation from some distance, becomes jealous and quits the concert. There are no other references to anything Italian in the six novels.

It is not much, to be fair, and unless one shares Elizabeth Bennet's perversion (you remember that she **enjoyed** her dislike of Mr. Bingley's sisters) one cannot enjoy the feeling that Jane Austen practically ignores Italy.

Not that I am proud of the fact that the Italians have practically ignored her for a very long time. Indeed I feel sorry for this, I am ashamed, but at the same time I feel that I had to point out some extenuating circumstances.

A very interesting article in the Report of your Society for 1968, "Without the Gift of Tongues", by Ruth M. Robbins, dates the first Italian translation of **Pride and Prejudice** from 1935. I have been able to find out that in fact there was one published three years earlier, 1932, in a collection called rather surprisingly "Biblioteca Romantica", by Giulio Caprin, a well known journalist and writer, whose familiarity with the English language and mastery of the Italian style enabled him to do a good job. It was reviewed by Mario Praz, whose interest in Miss Austen was to prove decisive, as we shall soon see, for her fortune in Italy. Its title was **Orgoglio e presunzione**, which seems very good to me, although not the best possible title. This should be **Orgoglio e pregiudizi**, as suggested by Emilia Bassi in 1914, but it has never been used. **Orgoglio e pregiudizio** has of course been chosen by

several translators, but the plural is much better, since in common language the equivalent of "Mrs. Bennet was full of prejudice" is "La signora Bennet era piena di pregiudizi". Another title used by an Italian translator is **Orgoglio e prevenzione**, and here I have to correct Mrs. Robbins, who sees in the word "prevenzione" a sense connected with the old English use of "to prevent" for "to anticipate", as exemplified by two Collects in the Book of Common Prayer: "by thy special grace **preventing** us", and "Lord we pray that thy grace may always **prevent** and follow us", and which also occurs, I should like to add, in T. S. Eliot's **East Coker**: "the absolute paternal care that will not leave us, but **prevents us** everywhere." Well, I can assure Mrs. Robbins that **prevenzione** means exactly the same as **pregiudizio**, and conveys no idea of anticipation.

As Mrs. Robbins has pointed out, the Italian translators have taken some liberties with the titles. There are four different titles for **Sense and Sensibility**: **Ragione e sentimento**, **Senno e sensibilita'**, **Sensibile amore**, which is charming, **Sensibilita' e buon senso**. None of them is perfect, and my suggestion is that it should be **Buon senso e sentimento**. **Mansfield Park** has been translated as **Villa Mansfield**, **Emma** as **La famiglia Woodhouse** (which is very stupid), **Northanger Abbey** as **Katherine Morland**, but the plum is **Ritorno a te** (I come back to you) for **Persuasion** (which was rendered in Portuguese, as Mrs. Robbins disclosed, as **Sangue Azul**).

Apart from Giulio Caprin, only one Italian distinguished writer has devoted his talent to translating Jane Austen, but this one is beyond comparison, it is Mario Praz himself. His translation of **Emma**, under the same title, of course, appeared in 1951, and was so successful that many Italian publishers felt that in Jane Austen there was money, and, to quote Mrs. Robbins again, "from 1951 on, greater interest in Jane Austen's work has been taken in Italy than in any other country." (A belated compensation for previous negligence, as it happens in Italy).

All the Austen novels have been repeatedly translated, the English text of **Pride and Prejudice** has been edited with Italian notes for the benefit of Italian students of English, cheap editions, the equivalent of the English paperbacks, have frequently appeared in Italian, and **Orgoglio e pregiudizio**, subtitled "romanzo per ragazzi", a novel for young boys (hear hear) has found its place in the **Serie azzurra**, collana per tutti (the blue series, a collection for everybody: it ought to include especially **Sangue azul**, I should say), in another collection called **tascabili rosa** (pink paperbacks, from blue to pink, what a variety), and in still another collection, charmingly described as "libri deliziosi, collana per signorinette" (delightful books, a collection for tiny young ladies).

Mario Praz is a linguist, a scholar, a writer and a wit, and

you can imagine how well equipped he is for the art of translating. The best Italian translation of a novel by Jane Austen is of course his own. He has a gift for "le mot juste", and the three attributes of Emma Woodhouse, "handsome, clever and rich", become in perfect Italian "avvenente, intelligente e ricca" (another writer, who is not a linguist, gives *furba* for *clever*, which is quite another thing). No difficulty is too great for Praz: he even translates Emma's charades, complete with rhymes: "Pompa di re dispiega il mio primiero, / il fasto dei signori della terra, / e il mio secondo mostra un altro impero, / il monarca che doma i mari ov'erra..." (You remember: My first displays the wealth and pomp of kings...) Miss Austen's arduous circumlocutions are easily conquered by Praz: "It is a great pity that their circumstances should be so confined" becomes "e' un gran peccato che le loro condizioni siano cosi' modeste". The famous "the Eltons were nobody", becomes, very elegantly: "gli Elton non erano niente". The even more famous "What did she say? Just what she ought, of course. A lady always does," becomes: "che cosa disse? Naturalmente cio' che doveva. Una signora fa sempre cosi". I am less happy with his rendering of "the chosen and the best" (with whom Mr. Woodhouse used to dine) as "alcuni degli eletti e dei favoriti," which seems to me an insistence on the idea of the chosen to the exclusion of that of the best.

But when I see a passage of incredible difficulty, such as "no flight of generosity run mad, opposing all that could be probable or reasonable" rendered as "alcun volo di generosita' impazzita, in contrasto con quanto poteva essere probabile o ragionevole," when I consider the amount of research that has enabled him to establish that in the refined society of early nineteenth century Italy, *backgammon* was *sbaraglino*, and *voi*, not *lei* nor *tu*, was the appropriate mode of address from Emma to Harriet, my admiration for Mario Praz is boundless.

As his translation excels by far all others in Italy, so Mario Praz is by far the best Italian critic who has dealt with Jane Austen. Not that there have been many, however. No essay on her was published in Italy until 1914, when a feminist writer, Emilia Bassi, joined her in a curious double bill with George Eliot: *La vita e le opere* (The life and works) of Jane Austen and George Eliot. Signora Bassi's approach was in the true feminist style: "ecco farsi innanzi una schiera eletta di donne coraggiose:" and now a distinguished band of courageous women comes to the fore, they enter the lists against the men, and very often they well may claim victory. Some of them, in the opinion of many critics, are superior to the men-novelists (Brigid Brophy should like this). Only think of Walter Scott's admiration for Mary Edgeworth and Jane Austen..." At the same time Signora Bassi feels rather sentimental about her beloved Giovanna (she always

calls her so): "How was it...that a girl whose physical, moral and intellectual charms were so many, did not conquer the heart of a man?" How was it, indeed?

As I have already mentioned, Signora Bassi was the first to suggest that Pregiudizi and not pregiudizio should be the Italian rendering of Prejudice, but for *Pride* she does not seem to be able to decide between orgoglio and superbia (orgoglio is of course the better). She also hesitates concerning **Sense and Sensibility**: sometimes she says *Buon senso ed impressionabilità* (which is tolerable, to use a Jane Austen word), at others *Buon senso ed eccessiva sensibilità*, which is awful. When she attempts a critical judgment she is only capable of conventional banalities: "Giovanna Austen makes me think of a fresh green meadow, enamelled with a million flowers, made golden by the sun..." George Eliot in contrast is "a mountain with deep valleys where thunders the impetuous stream." I am sorry to say that the copy of Signora Bassi's booklet which I have been able to consult at the National Library in Rome, appears to have been diligently studied and marked with admiration by some misguided reader.

One of the best Italian critics, Emilio Cecchi, published in 1915 his **History of English Literature in the nineteenth century**, and dealt at length (16 pages) with Jane Austen. I cannot say that he admires her very much. He is very keen on setting her in the proper perspective, establishing her relative independence from Fielding and Richardson and Sterne, and her affinity with Crabbe, her contrast with Wordsworth and Scott, denying (which is rather surprising) that she has anything in common with the Flemish genre-painters (Mario Praz feels differently), and finding (which is even more surprising) that she has some "rabbia hogarthiana", Hogarthian anger, explaining why Madame de Staël found her "vulgar", and why Chesterton liked her better than George Eliot and Charlotte Brontë, brilliantly describing as **mozartian** her chapter on the genteel entertainments of the Bath society. He praises Miss Austen's dedication to her work, feels sorry for her isolation, and very Italian-like takes an interest in her poor sentimental life. He is full of appreciation of her rapidity, her realism in presenting her characters always with an eye on their social and economic "consequence", exactly as it is done in the drawing-rooms of bourgeois society. He is delighted to discover that despite her apparent respect for "consequence" she in fact often caricatures the nobility, and "intraprende pian piano a levare i pennacchi di sulle berrette" (little by little plucks out the feathers from their hats).

Cecchi was an excellent writer, and some of his remarks are expressed very brilliantly: "Miss Austen accepts the new ideas with cautious reservation, as one accepts a new kind of stove", "her characters' behaviour can always be guessed. their

words are known in advance, as when the public hear the prompter before the actor", "her portrait of Catherine Morland is made with the affectionate cruelty of a doctor presenting a good little hunchback to his medical students."

Cecchi is much better in finding faults with Jane Austen than in praising her virtues. This he does in a rather perfunctory manner, but the stamp of deeply felt irritation marks his reproaches: "the sentimental nakedness of her characters shows the narrow-minded precision of a watchmaker", "a fleshless psychological play, with the flash of clockwork", "Miss Austen presents the events of life more or less like the turning of an empty spit on the cold fireplace of a desert kitchen".

What Cecchi reproaches most to Jane Austen is what he calls "her lack of moral indignation", and naturally he makes a great fuss about the unfortunate sentence in **Mansfield Park**: "Let other pens dwell on guilt and misery. I quit such odious subjects as soon as I can." He also calls her very severely to task for "not dealing with love, but with the intellectual passions: pride, ambition, vanity"; he says that she is "all reason, no sentiment", that "not one of the Bennet sisters falls, not even by chance, within the compass of a feeling which may be described as real love." Here I am truly flabbergasted to realize that a writer of Emilio Cecchi's reputation and learning, a critic who has long been considered, in Italy and in England alike, as one of the best English scholars in Italy (but mostly by Italians who had little English and by Englishmen who had little Italian) had so little knowledge and understanding of the English heart and English manners as to be blind to the fact that what all Miss Austen's novels are about is precisely love. Love of course **all' inglese**, not **all' italiana**, love with all the reticence and the self-control that good manners command, but love indeed. It is unbelievable that Emilio Cecchi's critical acumen can have failed to register the relevance of Jane's great cry in **Pride and Prejudice**: "oh, Lizzy! do anything rather than marry without affection!" (a **cri du coeur** that makes me adore both Janes, Jane Bennet and Jane Austen), and the exquisite key sentence in **Emma**: "there is no charm equal to tenderness of heart", a sentence as revealing, on English lips, as when an Italian proclaims: "I cannot live without you."

As for "moral indignation", here again Signor Cecchi shows very little familiarity with the English character. I wonder whether there is in the whole world one single reader who does not feel disgusted with Mrs. Norris or Lucy Steele or General Tilney or Lady Catherine de Bourgh. What is this, if not the result of moral indignation in the artist? When, at the end of **Sense and Sensibility**, Miss Austen sums up the career of Lucy Steele like this: "The whole of Lucy's behaviour and the prosperity which

crowned it...may be held forth as a most encouraging instance of what an earnest, an unceasing attention to self-interest...will do in securing every advantage of fortune", I presume not even Emilio Cecchi will think Miss Austen is recommending self-interest against virtue and blessing Lucy's career as an example of vice rewarded. This passage seems to me full to the brim with moral indignation, but again, **all' inglese**, without the thunder and gesticulation of Italian eloquence: and Signor Cecchi is quite wrong to expect such tantrums from a well-bred English young lady.

(By the way, when I told you that Edward Ferrars seems to me a complete ass, I should have mentioned that one trait of his endears him very much to me: when in his agitation, at the moment of disclosing that Lucy has married his brother and he is himself free to marry Elinor, "he took up a pair of scissors that lay there, and while spoiling both them and their sheath by cutting the later to pieces," he spoke his momentuous words. Bravo, very Italian-like.)

Signor Cecchi also misunderstands completely the humour, the wisdom and the charm of Mr. Bennet. For him Mr. and Mrs. Bennet are on a par: "sono due notevolissimi imbecilli" (they are two very remarkable imbeciles).

No, no, I cannot agree with Emilio Cecchi. And when he has the cheek to answer his own question: "is Miss Austen a great artist?" with an emphatic "certainly not", I am inclined to comment: Is Emilio Cecchi a great critic?

To Emilio Cecchi, however, the **Enciclopedia italiana** entrusted its article on Jane Austen, and although this was written fifteen years later than his **History**, it does not show any improvement. So I am afraid the official Italian opinion of Jane Austen is likely to appear to be what you have already heard: clockwork, fleshless psychological play, all reason, no sentiment.

The **Enciclopedia italiana**, incidentally, gives Miss Austen three quarters of a column, whilst Walter Scott has three: the proportion is less than one third. The **Encyclopedia Britannica** has three and a half for Jane Austen and seven for Scott, just double. I think these statistics are a fair representation of the lesser status Miss Austen has in Italy, in comparison with the English speaking world. And since the early thirties, when the **Enciclopedia** was published, the situation has not changed much. I am sorry to report that a very popular reference book published by Bompiani in 1966. **Centoun capolavori inglesi** (one hundred and one English masterpieces), although including Scott, of course, and even Charles Lamb and De Quincey, completely ignores Jane Austen.

We are saved, however, from cutting a very poor figure a-

mong the Janeites, by the outstanding works of Mario Praz. The understanding, the appreciation and the study of this great scholar make up, I think, for all the disregard and the censure Jane Austen has suffered in Italy.

From 1933, when his review of Jane Austen's **Letters to Cassandra** and of Giulio Caprin's translation of **Pride and Prejudice** appeared in **La cultura**, to his most recent book which has just been published, Professor Praz has concerned himself with Miss Austen very frequently and very thoroughly. The landmarks are his **History of English Literature**, his translation of **Emma**, which I have already dealt with, his study of **The Hero in Eclipse**, and an essay entitled **Jane Austen** which was originally an introduction to **Emma**, and was then reprinted as a chapter of his **Casa della fama**.

Far from exclaiming against the lack of love in Miss Austen, Professor Praz recognizes that her main concern is with "gli affari di cuore delle ragazze" (young ladies' love affairs) but "her love scenes are described in a chaste, sober language that would have pleased Manzoni", which is no mean praise. Faintings and sighs abound, but of kisses of love, not even one. "Let us look at her portrait, he proceeds, her eyes are large and seem benign, but her lips are thin and cruel. It was not for puritanism that she did not describe any kiss of love, it was for her dedication to truth, as she never described anything that she had not known and verified herself...But there is a point on which she abandons her usual reserve...Her weak point is dancing...The embraces she knew were those pale images of the commerce of love that are outlined in dancing."

Mario Praz remarks that although her world is limited, in her representation of bourgeois and aristocratic society Miss Austen is as great as the greatest novelist, "just as Vermeer is as great as Rembrandt". He insists in his comparison with Dutch painters and likens her scenes of domestic life "to the neat interiors of Terborch and Vermeer. It is in such cases that one feels the truth of the saying that **genius is patience**".

He also establishes another comparison. (This passage is in **The Hero in Eclipse**, and I quote it in the excellent translation of Angus Davidson). "With Jane Austen one is reminded of the functional elegance of certain English instruments and pieces of furniture. The kind of English furniture that has polished surfaces, strong, delicate joints and unemphatic mouldings, and that is adorned by the names of Hepplewhite and Sheraton".

Professor Praz disapproves of Emilio Cecchi's censure, which he calls bitchy, and says that the "empty spit" simile would never had been applied by Cecchi to Pope "whose characters are **also** "futile", and whose satirical representation **also** is not based on any deeply felt moral principle. "The art of Pope and Jane Austen,

he says, must be considered in the light of the taste of their age... In condemning Jane Austen Emilio Cecchi shows himself unable to escape from the limits of Romanticism." Which is very true.

One more Italian writer, and very recently, has examined Jane Austen's novels. He is Alberto Arbasino, the author of the novel *Anonimo lombardo* (translated into English by Bernard Wall as the *The Lost Boy*), and the critical essays *60 posizioni* (sixty positions). In this book, published only a few months ago, he has a chapter on Miss Austen which was written in 1963, on the occasion of the appearance of several Austen novels as Italian cheap paperbacks. How much the Italian opinion on Jane Austen has changed since Signora Bassi's flowery simile of the "enamelled meadow made golden by the sun" is well shown by Signor Arbasino's remark that it was absurd to consider as "a writer for young ladies" a novelist "who is in fact as innocent as a satyr offering toffees around." As you see he can be very brilliant (and bitchy).

Developing a hint by Emilio Cecchi, Signor Arbasino sees much in common between Jane Austen and Mozart. "Guided by the naughtiness of the Enlightenment, her good Sense arranges a series of rigorous *Così fan tutte*" "Like Mozart, she is an artist that the eighteenth century tried to produce out of time." Signor Arbasino is not put out by the narrowness of her experience: "Her subjects are limited to the Family (as in Sophocles, Freud, Ivy Compton Burnett) and Money (as in the *Financial Times*)"... "Of course she is not interested in the Napoleonic wars: the Nelson of narrative is she!"... "The young lady from Hampshire becomes the first Modern Novelist because without moving from her vicarage she invents the form of a tradition that did not exist."

But much as I agree with Arbasino, I cannot understand how he can repeat the stale remark that "Miss Austen reduces love to social play which has a meaning...only for its economic ends." Instead of being diverted by the *Financial Times*, Signor Arbasino would have done better to concentrate more seriously on Jane Austen, and he would have discovered that the subordination of love to economic ends, loveless marriages, and the fact that money is generally the key to success, are precisely among the evils that she condemns.

Well, now that I have finished reporting about what Signora Bassi, Emilio Cecchi, Mario Praz and Alberto Arbasino think of Jane Austen, I hope I have also shown how Filippo Donini feels about her. But in case I have not been explicit enough, let me conclude by a last quotation, and allow me to retouch a little what Henry Tilney says in a famous passage from *Northanger Abbey*. Let me proclaim openly, publicly, emphatically, and *all' italiana*, that "the person, be it gentleman or lady, who has not pleasure in a novel by Jane Austen, must be intolerably stupid."

THE JANE AUSTEN SOCIETY

Report for the Year, 1972



Chawton House in the 19th Century, from a Letterhead.

THE JANE AUSTEN SOCIETY

(FOUNDED IN 1940 BY DOROTHY G. DARNELL)

President :

The Lord David Cecil, C.H.

Vice-President :

John Gore, Esq., C.V.O.

Chairman and Honorary Secretary :

Sir Hugh Smiley, Bt.

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Mrs. Michael Ash ; J. Butler-Kearney, Esq. ;
Miss Elizabeth Jenkins ; Mrs. K. A. Robbins ;
Mrs. Rupert Shervington ; Lady Smiley ;
B. C. Southam, Esq. ; Lady Stirling

Honorary Treasurer :

C. A. Jenkins, Esq., Lloyds Bank, Ltd., Alton, Hampshire

Honorary Auditors :

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Francis E. Carpenter, Esq. ; Thomas F. Carpenter, Esq. ;
Arthur J. Clarke, Esq. ; Miss Elizabeth Jenkins ;
Sir Hugh Smiley, Bt.

THE JANE AUSTEN SOCIETY

Report for the year 1972

Membership

There were 72 new members during the year. Of these six became Life Members, as did two old members. Three institutions became members. There are now 604 Life Members, including 30 institutions, and 553 paid up members. Over 90 annual members have not paid their subscriptions for 1972.

Members are reminded that subscriptions are due on January 1st, and that this Report is the only reminder that they will receive. The Hon. Secretary would much appreciate prompt payment of the 50p Annual Subscription, and will gladly provide a Banker's Order Form.

Annual General Meeting

The Annual General Meeting was held at Chawton House, by permission of Major and Mrs. Edward Knight, on Saturday, 15th July.

About 260 members and 150 guests were present. Lord David Cecil presided. Opening the meeting, the President paid tribute to the late Duke of Wellington, his predecessor for sixteen years.

The minutes of the last Annual Meeting were taken as read.

The Hon. Secretary presented the Annual Report for 1971. He reported on the Society's contribution to the protest of the Lyme Regis Society against the proposed construction of a sewage works at a focal point on the sea front, and to the assistance offered to the British Council regarding a literary scholarship to a Bulgarian student. He also outlined possible arrangements for the bicentenary of Jane Austen's birth, in 1975.

The motion was seconded by Mrs. Carling, and carried.

The Hon. Treasurer presented the accounts for 1971, showing a satisfactory year. Adoption of the accounts was proposed by the Rev. R. W. Pilgrim, seconded by Miss E. M. Hart, and carried.

The Countess of Huntingdon proposed the re-election of Lord David Cecil as President of the Society, of Mr. John Gore as Vice-President, and of Sir Hugh Smiley, Bt., as Chairman. This was seconded by Mrs. Ralph Ricketts, and carried.

The President proposed that the Committee be re-elected en block. This included Mrs. Michael Ash, who had been co-opted during the year. The Society had received with regret the resignation of Mr. Hugh Powell.

The meeting was addressed by Miss Rosalind Wade, who spoke on the Anatomy of Jane Austen.

A vote of thanks was proposed by Brigadier P. W. Mead, C.B.E., a great-great grandson of Admiral Charles Austen, Jane Austen's youngest brother. This was seconded by Mrs. C. Kerridge, and carried.

The President closed the meeting by thanking Major and Mrs. Edward Knight for lending Chawton House once more for the meeting.

Annual General Meeting, 1973

The Annual General Meeting will be held at Chawton House, by permission of Major and Mrs. Edward Knight, on Saturday, 21st July.

The meeting will be addressed by Miss Joan Hassall, R.E., F.S.I.A., wood engraver and illustrator. Miss Hassall illustrated the five novels for the Folio Society between 1957 and 1963, and was Master of the Art Workers' Guild for 1972.

Bicentenary, 1975

The Committee hopes to arrange a loan exhibition at Jane Austen's House during the Summer of 1975. The Hon. Secretary would gladly hear of any objects closely connected with the Austen family which their owners would be kind enough to lend for this occasion.

The Committee is arranging a concert of contemporary music, with readings from the novels, which will be held, it is hoped, in Winchester.

New Exhibits

Mrs. B. M. J. McCausland has given a fretwork letter box, which was given as a wedding present to her great-grandmother, Fanny Knight, on her marriage to Sir Edward Knatchbull, Bt., by her grandfather, Sir Brook Bridges, Bt.

Mrs. McCausland has also given a silhouette of Susanna Sackree, nurse for nearly 60 years to Fanny Knight and her brothers and sisters.

The family of the late Lieut.-Colonel and Mrs. Edward Bradford have given Susanna Sackree's prayer book, which is bound in red leather and bears her name stamped in gold lettering. Lieut.-Colonel and Mrs. Bradford were both grandchildren of Edward Knight, the eldest son in the family nursed by Susanna Sackree, their mothers being his daughters.

Colonel E. J. C. Spanton has lent an oak carved writing case, bearing the initials J.A. underneath the Austen crest. This came from Colonel Spanton's grandfather, the Rev. Edward Austen, son of Jane Austen's brother, Admiral Sir Francis Austen. It was thought that the Admiral carved it for his sister shortly before she died.

The Admiral's cleverness with his hands was referred to in the Annual Report for 1955, in describing an ivory box now at Jane Austen's House, and made by him. He believed that part of Captain Harville's character and skill, as described in *Persuasion*. Chapter XI, was suggested by his own.



Jane Austen

(*National Portrait Gallery*)

The drawing by her sister Cassandra. A portrait, based on this sketch, was commissioned by her family to be included in the Memoir written by her nephew, J. E. Austen Leigh, in 1869. The artist was Mr. Andrews of Maidenhead.

Jane Austen's Hair

In 1971 the Committee felt that the lock of hair, which had been presented by Mrs. Henry Burke of Baltimore in 1949, had faded. Dr. J. A. Swift of Unilever agreed to examine and retint the hair. He concluded that within the last three years of her life Jane Austen did little to tend her hair and that brushing, combing and handling were minimal.

In December 1798, when she was nearly twenty three, Jane Austen wrote from Steventon to her sister Cassandra, who was then staying at Godmersham. "I have made myself two or three caps to wear of evenings since I came home, and they save me a world of torment as to hair-dressing, which at present gives me no trouble beyond washing and brushing, for my long hair is always plaited up out of sight, and my short hair curls well enough to want no papering".

Describing her aunt's appearance, Caroline Austen says, "Her hair, a darkish brown, curled naturally — it was in short curls round her face. She always wore a cap - such was the custom with ladies who were not quite young - at least of a morning but I never saw her without one, to the best of my remembrance, either morning or evening".

Caroline Austen's memoir was written in 1867, fifty years after Jane Austen's death, which took place when Caroline was a child of eleven or twelve.

This lock of hair was given after Jane Austen's death by her sister Cassandra to Miss Harriet Palmer. At that time Miss Palmer was looking after the motherless children of her sister Fanny, who had married Charles Austen, Jane's youngest brother. He married Harriet as his second wife in 1820. They had a son, Charles John (1821-1867), who had a family which included two daughters, Jane (1849-1928) and Emma Florence (1851-1939).

The lock of hair passed by descent to them, and was sold by them, probably in 1924. The hair was sold at Sotheby's, as the property of Mr. Frederick R. Lovering of St. Austell, Cornwall, on 3rd May, 1948, and bought by Mrs. Burke.

At the Annual Meeting in 1949 the late Mr. T. Edward Carpenter was relating from the platform how he had bought certain Jane Austen material at the Sotheby's sale, and lamenting the fact that the lock of hair had gone for too high a figure, whereupon Mrs. Burke stood up in the audience and said that it was she who had bought it, and that she would present it. This dramatic moment will be well remembered by those present.

Susanna Sackree, 1761-1851

'Dearest CAKY,' as the eleven children of Edward and Elizabeth Knight of Godmersham Park called her, went to the Knights as their nurse for the birth of their first child, Fanny, in January 1793. She stayed with them for nearly 60 years until her death in 1851.

She must have been very much loved and trusted by the parents. In 1799, when Edward, his wife, and their daughter Fanny were at Bath, where Edward was undergoing a cure for his gout, Fanny writes to her Aunt Cassandra that Sackree was left in charge at Godmersham, looking after 'my little brothers.' There were four of them by then.

In August 1805 a Mr. Hall, a hairdresser from London, stayed at Godmersham to cut the family's hair, and 'he charged 5/- for every lesson to Sace.'



In June 1808 Sackree took William to Eltham School, at Dartford in Kent; and then went to London, for Jane Austen wrote: 'she wishes you to know that she has been in the great world, and as well as myself saw the ladies go to Court on the 4th. She had the advantage indeed of me in being in the Palace.' Possibly she had a relative in domestic service there.

Elizabeth Knight's eleventh child was born on 28th September, 1808, and twelve days later she died suddenly. What a comfort Caky must have been then to Edward and his eleven children.

Sackree was ill in 1813, and Jane wrote: 'I am sorry to find that Sackree was worse again when Fanny wrote, she had been seized ill the night before with violent shivering and fever, and was still so ill as to alarm Fanny who was writing from her room.'

When she died she was buried at Godmersham Church. A tablet on the North buttress of the Chancel carries the following inscription:

In
memory of
SUSANNA SACKREE
the faithful servant and friend
for nearly 60 years
of Edward Knight Esquire of Godmersham Park
and the beloved nurse of all his children.
She died deeply lamented, on the 2nd of March
A.D. 1851
in the ninetieth year of her age.

At her own desire the following inscription is placed on her tombstone:

'Flee from evil, and do the thing that is good
For the Lord loves the thing that is good.'
'Keep innocency and take heed unto the thing that is right; for that
shall bring a man peace at the last.

My dearest friends I leave behind,
Who were to me so good and kind;
The Lord I hope will all them bless,
And my poor soul will be at rest.

Jane Austen in Bath

Copies of *Jane Austen in Bath*, by Jean Freeman, can be obtained from: The Selborne Bookshop, Alton, Hampshire.

Price: 33p (post free).



The Anatomy of Jane Austen :

Address to the Jane Austen Society, 15th July, 1972

Lord David Cecil, Ladies and Gentlemen, to come to Chawton on a summer afternoon to think and talk about Jane Austen is an exhilarating experience - particularly as Chawton or Celstone as it was once known, has returned miraculously to its former quietude. We have the advantage of knowing that the most important periods of Jane Austen's activity were concentrated into this immediate area. Even if we remember that she visited Bath, Devonshire, Dorset and London ; was born in nearby Steventon and lived for a while at Southampton, we still have the very kernel of the situation here in Chawton.

And yet, paradoxically, the 'centralisation' of Jane Austen in Chawton actually increases our difficulty in finding out much that we would wish to know about her. I use the phrase 'finding out' advisedly, for none of us here today would be satisfied with a second-hand, reach-me-down estimate of Jane Austen. It has been said that more books have been published about her than any other author with the exception of D. H. Lawrence. And yet, how little most of them are able to tell us about the real Jane Austen. Like Lawrence, few writers have been more positively adulated and denigrated than Jane Austen. It would seem that the crowds of people who wander through Chawton Cottage or gather before her picture in the National Portrait Gallery fall into two distinct camps. Those who say they 'can't bear' Jane Austen and 'never read her', in tones which suggest that they deserve a specially designed medal - (if they were honest they might add that they have never tried to read Jane Austen, and have looked from a respectful distance at a set of leather-bound volumes on the family bookshelves, as G. B. Stern admitted she had done in her section of **'Talking of Jane Austen'** - a valuable fast-moving commentary on the novels and their backgrounds, not really marred by a certain archness of approach - until she 'switched camps';) and others who regard the novelist as the High Priestess of an exclusive fraternity ; playing parlour games with quotes and generally claiming to be 'Janeites', an apt description first coined by Rudyard Kipling in his amusing story of that name. This is not to question that there is a genuine benefit in memorising some of the many shrewd comments which abound in the novels.

But if the reaction of many members of the ordinary reading public so blatantly at variance, it is only fair to remind ourselves that this has also been the case with the supremely well-informed. To take the denigrators first : Mark Twain declared that the works of Jane Austen inspired in him an 'animal repugnance' - whatever that may be - and more coherently though even less logically 'that a good library is one that contains no novels by Jane Austen even if it contains no other books'. However, there are others

who have expressed themselves with more balance and lucidity, such as Professor Garrod in his scholarly essay: **Jane Austen - a Depreciation**. H. G. Wells wrote of 'prunes and prisms'; Katherine Mansfield was strongly critical: Charlotte Brönte, beginning her ferocious attack with the apologetic premise 'If this be heresy', wrote from the depths of her wild tempestuous heart, unable to accept a world so different from her own, wherein a disciplined approach offered opportunities for satire and subtlety: 'An accurate, daguerreotyped portrait of a common-place face; a carefully fenced, highly cultivated garden with neat borders and delicate flowers: but no glance of a bright, vivid physiognomy, no open country, no fresh air, no blue hill, no bonny beck ...' She wrote this really wonderfully phrased denunciation to a wise and infinitely perceptive writer and critic, George Henry Lewes, who shared with his life partner, George Eliot, a deep admiration of Jane Austen's work. This exchange of views took place in 1847 mainly on the basis of **Mansfield Park**. He was in distinguished company: Sir Walter Scott had said: 'that the young lady has a talent for describing the involvement of feeling and character and ordinary life' which was 'the most wonderful ever met with'. Anthony Trollope thought **Pride and Prejudice** the finest novel in the English language. Southey said. 'Her novels are more true to Nature and have passages of finer feeling than any other in her age'. Yet perhaps the accolade was awarded most impressively by Macaulay who said: 'She prefers to give us a multitude of characters, all common-place yet perfectly discriminated ...'

Thus, almost certainly, the approvers had a score well above the detractors, from the date of the first genuine scholarly appreciation published in the *English Quarterly* in 1821, some four years after Jane Austen's death, when the last of her six novels had been posthumously published. And yet the battle has continued unabated, with people feeling the need to go to extreme lengths to express either their 'love' or 'hatred' for the works of Jane Austen.

Eventually, the dispute came to be based as much on the attributes or the reverse of Jane Austen's own personality and disposition as on the quality of her books. And the responsibility for this, even though it may have been unintentional, must be squarely laid on the shoulders of a near literary neighbour, Mary Russell Mitford of Alresford. Her impulsive letter concerning the Austens, written in confidence that it would never be read by other eyes, has so often been misquoted and reproduced out of context that it justifies re-reading now.

Mary Mitford's judgements on books and people were stimulating and uninhibited. She disliked the work of Maria Edgeworth, which she found cold and calculating. Charles Dickens, she dismissed contemptuously, and she found Charlotte Brönte 'vulgar': but without a doubt she admired Jane Austen as will be

seen from the farrago of original views and hearsay that the letter contains.

A **propos** to novels, I have discovered that our great favourite, Miss Austen, is my country-woman; that mamma knew all her family very intimately; and that she herself is an old maid (I beg her pardon - I mean a young lady) with whom mamma before her marriage was acquainted. Mamma says that she was then the prettiest, silliest, most affected, husband-hunting butterfly she ever remembers; and a friend of mine, who visits her now, says that she has stiffened into the most perpendicular, precise, taciturn piece of 'single blessedness' that ever existed, and that, till **Pride and Prejudice** showed what a precious gem was hidden in that unbending case, she was no more regarded in society than a poker or fire-screen, or any other thin or upright piece of wood or iron that fills its corner in peace and quietness. The case is very different now; she is still a poker - but a poker of whom everyone is afraid. It must be confessed that this silent observation from such an observer is rather formidable. Most writers are good-humoured chatters. But a wit, a delineator of character who does not talk, is terrific indeed. After all, I do not know that I can quite vouch for this account.

When quoting this letter, the most reliable version of which apart from the original MS now in the British Museum, is in **Lestranger's Miss Mitford** (published 1870), how many people also mention the reference in Mary Mitford's Volume II of **Notes on a Literary Life** to the meeting between Ann Elliott and her admirer in a shoe shop in Bath during a storm of rain ...

'I doubt if anyone, even Scott himself, have left such perfect impressions of character and place as Jane Austen ...' she wrote 35 years after Jane Austen's death.

The original relationship between the two families, the Russells and the Mitfords was one of propinquity rather than any apparent close friendship. Mary Russell Mitford's mother, Mary Russell, had lived at Ashe, near Steventon and Deane, where Dr. Richard Russell, her father, served as Rector for a number of years. A visit to the villages quickly establishes the ease with which the Russells would have been able to 'keep watch' over the more vivacious and numerous Austens. Mary Russell would have been some 25 years older than Jane Austen, which renders the critical comment on a young girl all the more waspish; Mary Russell Mitford was twelve years younger than Jane Austen and had never lived at Ashe or known the Austen family. But it would seem she had a keen and maintained interest in them, as though she had 'marked them down'. County families have been doing just that for generations.

One could not say she denigrated Jane Austen as a writer

... 'to follow Nature and Miss Austen' was the overall rule she set herself for her unrealised ambition to write a novel. Years later she told a member of the Austen family that she would sacrifice her right hand if by doing so she could 'write like Miss Austen'. She mentions admiringly the beautiful garden created by the Austens during their short domicile in Southampton and when Jane Austen died and the news finally reached her, she wrote to a friend: 'surely it cannot be our Miss Austen ...' Yet, apart from her unfulfilled desire to become a novelist, she did not have any just cause for jealousy. Before Jane Austen achieved fame Mary Russell Mitford, though so much younger, had published several books, mainly poetry, written with the express aim of making money to support her impecunious parents, and had more than one play produced in London. Yet who would attempt to rationalise the envy and hostility of one woman regarding another from afar? (Incidentally, there is no evidence to suggest that Jane Austen had ever heard of Mary Russell Mitford.) Be that as it may, the sharp comments alerted Jane Austen's admirers to a need for positive attack rather than defence and the battle has been joined ever since between the acid spinster and the allegedly charming maiden lady.

Both versions could, in part, be true. No writer equipped to achieve Jane Austen's unchallengeable position in English literature could be merely 'nasty' or 'nice'. The technique of construction, the perfection of style and the proportionment of character must have its origins in the varied disposition and experience of the author. The real Jane Austen must be searched for beneath layers of misinterpretation. She herself would have expected nothing less. In her own words, she did not 'write for such dull elves as have no ingenuity themselves'.

Scant tribute has been offered to the achievement of Jane Austen by the various film and stage versions of her novels, wherein the characters are presented in over-elaborate costumes and speak in rapid high-pitched tones, with the result by inference that these 'off the mark' interpretations became somehow synonymous with Jane Austen herself. In fact, apart from conflicting descriptions of her appearance made many years later, there is no valid record available of how she looked or spoke. As everyone forms a different mental picture of people living in an age other than their own, the problem is to see a historical celebrity in the round, going about his or her daily business, not caught in the cross-fire of a dramatic high-light. Equally, confusion has arisen from the assumption that Jane Austen lived in an era of mid-Victorian conformity. In fact, other women writers of her period enjoyed freedom and distinction, as for example, Anna Seward, the 'Swan of Lichfield', a 'sort of Darwin in petticoats' who was actually 30 years older than Jane Austen; Hannah More, prolific in output, using literature as a means of disseminating religious

instruction; - a writer disliked by Jane Austen, was about the same age as Anna Seward. Maria Edgeworth, a contemporary of Jane Austen, was famed for her novels on Ireland and childrens' books. She travelled widely, companioning her equally famous father; and Fanny Burney, who enjoyed huge sales, totalling £3,000 for one of her novels, even buying her own house, pursued a career at court.

Jane Austen was infinitely more gifted than any of them: yet while they moved about freely, undertook social or educative work and wrote poetry, novels and plays, she passed the parallel years in a cocoon of humdrum security. It has been claimed by her admirers that she accepted her 'lot' with equanimity and desired no other way of life; an analysis of her which, given the relevant facts and data, would seem unlikely to be true.

The search then, is for an acute, vigorous, creative artist of strong emotion and ambition whose personal and professional life went devastatingly wrong due to a variety of circumstances and through no one's fault. Once having acknowledged failure in love and authorship, Jane Austen was honest and generous enough to make every effort to adapt herself to the role of a useful aunt and 'dependent' female relative.

How did this curious situation come about since there was in her youth no question of a daunting or repressive influence? We learn that her father, the Rev. George Austen, himself educated his younger daughter, last but one of the 7 children, after the curious interlude of 'boarding schools' with her older sister, Cassandra, at Southampton and Reading; sojourn at the former through illness having nearly cost her her life. She must have been a responsive pupil, possessing her own discriminating library. In the mornings George Austen often read aloud from Cowper, one of her favourite authors. But above all, like Maria Edgeworth, she wrote from the earliest age, mostly plays and charades performed for and by the household, some of which survive in MS form.

Thus, she was barely twenty-two when her first full-length novel was completed in the form of letters, a popular story-telling device of the period. Her father, aglow with paternal enthusiasm, sent an enquiry regarding *Lady Susan: First Impressions* (later renamed *Pride and Prejudice*) to a London publisher, Mr. Cadell, indicating that it was 'after the manner of Miss Burney', accompanied by the suggestion that it might be financed by the 'young person' who was the authoress, if the publisher would agree to read it. Sensing perhaps, something tiresome and amateurish, although at this period underwriting by the author was quite usual, the firm promptly replied in the negative.

One cannot blame the Rector for his handling of his daughter's 'oeuvre' although it is worth remembering that Fanny Burney's first novel was published without her father's knowledge. What

actual degree of disappointment resulted from this curious, negative form of rejection is difficult to assess. Almost certainly the possibility that her father acted wrongly did not occur to her or to anyone else. Yet what might it have meant to her at that time and in the future if the novel had been first considered and then accepted? Or, perhaps she had not seriously believed **First Impressions** would be published, even if she dreamed vaguely of being like 'Miss Burney'. At any rate she was soon well away with **Elinor and Marianne**, afterwards called **Sense and Sensibility**, which does not appear to have been offered to a publisher. She was then only 23 and a few months after its completion she was busy with **Northanger Abbey**, first known as **Susan**. Here was something quite different for the testing of her powers - a parody of the Gothic novel which grew of itself into a novel in its own right containing some judgements and observations of an outstanding maturity.

One of the most curious circumstances we have to consider is that **Northanger Abbey** proved to be the only negotiable one of her first three novels. Perhaps this was because the placing of it was not undertaken by her father, but by a family friend able to effect an introduction to a firm named Crosbie. The sum Jane Austen was paid outright - £10 - at a time when the 'royalty' agreement was unknown, has been consistently belittled as derisory. But if one takes into account the purchasing power of the £ in 1803 the sum would be about £60, comparable to an 'advance' for an untried young writer today. One can hardly estimate the enormous lift to her spirit that this money must have occasioned, two years after her departure from Steventon to Bath, and during a period which had been depressing with maternal illness and her father's retirement.

Did she see, in this sudden swelling of her personal dress allowance of £20 per annum, a new freedom: independence on an undreamed of dimension, comparable to that of other women writers of her day? She was then 28, mature enough to see herself as unlikely ever to marry - even if she still wished to do so - for it is more than possible that the close kinship with her father and brothers had subconsciously conditioned her to a state of family unity so that she could not readily accept the intrusion of another man in her life. Ailing and invalidish though he was, the Rev. George Austen must have been elated, even if not for the same reasons. Respect too, within the family circle, now that the haphazard scribblings had actually been paid for!

All in all, although the sale of **Northanger Abbey** is one of the least publicised events of Jane Austen's life, it might not be going too far to class it as the most important.

It is often erroneously surmised that the publisher 'forgot' all about the book he had purchased and left it on the shelf to

gather dust. Yet a firm as keen and shrewd as Crosbie's would have known what they were doing - or thought they did. Differences of editorial opinion prevailed to keep the book off the presses and six long years slid away, during which time Jane Austen saw her rose-coloured dream of being an acclaimed author slip from her grasp. But she was not sentimental about it. During the Southampton period, when she wrote a business-like letter over an assumed name asking for news of the book's publication and offering to supply another copy if the original was mislaid, she revealed her native perspicacity. Left to themselves, the Editorial Managers might have gone on sleeping. Jolted thus, they snapped back, repaying the sarcasm by an assertion of their legal 'rights'. To have 'bought back' the novel would have involved unbearable humiliation and was not to be thought of. She could not really have deluded herself that the 'revolt' had been beneficial.

It was a twilight period for her talent. Those who would see the years at Bath and at Southampton as a jolly period of family visitations forget the leaden weight of disappointment which lay upon the spirit of the 33 year-old 'failed' authoress. Of course, it was very normal for the times that, after Mr. Austen's death, the three women, Mrs. Austen, Cassandra and Jane, should live together either by themselves or with members of their family. Larger houses and ready service made this kind of regimen possible. Yet that is not to assume that it was congenial. *Susan*, an unfinished, undated fragment, and revealing *The Watsons*, described by a relative as 'lacking in refinement', may have served to keep her pen in practice - yet at what a cost in dim hopelessness and frustration. There are few sadder companions than rejected novels and she had three of them on her hands! These years saw the consolidation of the arrangement by which the trio would remain together until Jane's death in 1817. Put it as one may, dependence was the undisputed role of the younger daughter of a widowed mother without 'prospects', and as such there was no escape from it.

One is tempted to ask, is this why she despised and derided wealthy people and frequently displayed them as being unbearably snobbish and domineering? She can convey this very gently.

'Sir Walter Elliot of Kellynch Hall in Somersetshire, was a man who for his own amusement never took up any book but the baronetage ...' (*Persuasion*). This is sheer irony; yet the portrait of Lady Catherine de Bourgh in *Pride and Prejudice*, so often unfairly described as 'exaggerated', has the hallmark of detached truth.

Lady Catherine was a tall, large woman, with strongly marked features, which might once have been handsome. Her air was not conciliating, nor was her manner of receiving them such as to make her visitors forget their inferior rank.

She was not rendered formidable by silence, but whatever she said was spoken in so authoritative a tone as marked her self-importance.

To say that her pen is dipped in vitriol is to go much too far, for those words show Jane Austen to be perfectly in control of her brilliant delineation of a domestic despot under whose treatment a sensitive spirit had writhed. Equally, to suggest that the origins of such a portrait have their basis in pure 'fun' or 'lightheartedness' is also to misread the author's deliberate intent, which is presumably to underline the corrupting influence of money and position particularly when used against a defenceless girl or impecunious spinster.

It is poverty only which makes celibacy contemptible to a generous public! A single woman, with a very narrow income, must be a ridiculous, disagreeable old maid, the proper sport of boys and girls, but a single woman of good fortune is always respectable, and may be as sensible and pleasant as anybody else.

Thus speaks Emma Woodhouse. Yet leaving aside the financial aspect which seems so strongly to have coloured Jane Austen's attitude of mistrust towards older people, particularly married women, in impregnable positions of wealth and prestige, what can have been her true opinion of her own mother? To what extent did this outsize personality, daughter of a Fellow of All Souls College, Oxford, and so derived from a more intellectual stock than most of Jane Austen's maternal characters, lay her inspirational influence upon the novels?

As to this, there are very few clues. Jane Austen does not as a rule attempt to bridge the 'generation gap'. The mothers and older women in her novels appear mature and set, surely long before their time in an age when early marriage was the norm? Their concerns and considerations and ambitions appear trivial, even though in most cases it is assumed that affection for their offspring or nephews and nieces dominates them. Others are plainly ineffectual and merit a gentle mockery. We are told that Mrs. Price spent her days 'in a kind of slow bustle'. Or, in the words of Mrs. Bennett in *Pride and Prejudice* ... 'such tremblings, such flutterings all over me ... Such spasms in my head ... and such beatings of my heart ...' and indeed many similar instances could be quoted from the novels to underline the teasing criticism, if not outright contempt, that Jane Austen apparently felt for some older members of her own sex.

Recently, a re-published essay on Jane Austen claimed that as a girl she displayed distinct signs of having a 'social' conscience which with the years degenerated into a tame acceptance of money standards and comfort; the contention is interesting but it can be readily reputed. It is a common error when attempting to gauge

the attitudes of people in a past age to attribute to them current viewpoints which we ourselves hold. A 'welfare state' in miniature could be and was provided by such people as the Austens, undertaking their parish duties on a family basis prompted by the very highest sense of responsibility. Through Lady Catherine de Bourgh Jane Austen assesses the situation perfectly.

Whenever any of the cottagers were disposed to be quarrelsome, discontented, or too poor, she sallied forth into the village to settle their differences, silence their complaints and scold them into harmony and plenty.

In *Emma*, written when Jane Austen was nearly forty, Emma Woodhouse takes a similar though more compassionate and realistic view of her responsibilities. Thus it may be argued that although the obligations of a Rector's daughter were by this time part of a remote past, the needs and problems of sick or impecunious people were by no means forgotten.

Yet it is a brave reader who seeks to learn from the thoughts and actions of the characters Jane Austen's private opinions and ultimate dispositions. To attempt to do so would be to press the author's creative faculty into a strait-jacket of recounting personal reactions and experiences. But it is through the 'other' Emma, heroine of the unfinished *The Watsons*, a product of the bitter self-examination of the Southampton period, that perhaps we come nearest to the recording of Jane Austen's own views in a work in which she permitted herself elbow room to discuss the cruel dilemma of her 'dependent' heroine.

To be so bent on marriage - to pursue a Man merely for the sake of situation - is a sort of thing that shocks me: I cannot understand it. Poverty is a great Evil, but to a woman of education and feeling it ought not, it cannot be the greatest - I would rather be a teacher at a school (and I can think of nothing worse) than marry a Man I did not like.

Although she **appears** to believe, in all her other novels, that marriage was the desired objective and her heroines conform readily enough to the 'Cinderella-happy-ever-after-type-of-marriage', after a token show of 'spirit', Jane Austen, as her Letters reveal, could follow them beyond the final page. In doing so, she was uncomfortably aware of the hazards such 'happiness' presented, as for example the frequently unwanted pregnancies. Two sisters-in-law and several acquaintances had died in childbirth. 'Anna has not had a chance of escape ...' she wrote of one of her favourite nieces, pregnant before the first child was weaned. 'Poor animal, she will be worn out before she is 30. I am so very sorry for her ...'. All she could suggest as a practical remedy in a world innocent of contraception was the 'simple regimen of separate rooms ...' 'From her appearance I suspect her to be in the family way ... she's in for it, ... poor woman', or 'Mrs. Hall of Sherborne

was brought to bed yesterday of a dead child: I suppose she happened unawares to look at her husband'. This in a nutshell, was the dilemma of the sensitive woman during the early part of the nineteenth century - a choice between over-use of the reproductive organs or genteel celibacy.

Throughout literary history the existence of Letters has represented the most conclusive assistance in revealing facets of the writer's character. Although a large part of Jane Austen's Correspondence was destroyed by Cassandra, understandably jealous of her sister's privacy, much that was spared exposes a sophisticated attitude of mind which shocked and astonished many people when the Letters were first published. True, Sir Leslie Stephen condemned the correspondence as 'trivial', a judgement singularly lacking in perception for he should at least have acknowledged the remarkable energy and cogency of expression; but Francis Warre Cornish, on the other hand, author of *Jane Austen in the English Men of Letters* series, in objecting strongly to the passage about 'Mrs. Hall', wishes 'it had not been written'. I do not think we can endorse his sensitive approach. So much of even more importance was uncovered, as for example the 'treatise' on novel writing written to her niece - the same Anna she had so pitied - displaying an astute and serious attitude to the 'craft' of Fiction which would of itself alone dispel the fantasy of a charming maiden lady's haphazard 'scribbling.. 'I will not allow the novel to prove anything ...' Practical confirmation of her view, an indictment of loading the novel with propaganda, is contained in a long letter to her sister. Ironically, her practice of what she preached created yet another area of misinterpretation - that she did not know about or understand any of the serious events which beset the nation during her lifetime.

And so perhaps, coming full circle, it may be seen that we have abundant evidence, mainly I would suggest through the medium of her voluminous if incomplete Correspondence, of the real woman, buried though she may be beneath accumulated layers either of sentimental regard or unfair blame. It is fortunate for us that she was aware, while knowing very well what lay outside the 'small' world of the village or country town, and of the problems which beset her fellow writers, that her talent would best be expressed by polishing and improving a sharp edged assessment of what actually took place in her immediate environment. Sadness at the futility of human behaviour was blended with an unerring understanding of what constituted genuine enjoyment - for others if not for herself! Let us this afternoon salute the real woman - she is seen to be all the greater when we appreciate her variability and depth.

Rosalind Wade.

THE JANE AUSTEN SOCIETY

Report for the Year, 1973



Edmund comforting Fanny

Joan Hassall

The Folio Society

THE JANE AUSTEN SOCIETY

(FOUNDED IN 1940 BY DOROTHY G. DARNELL)

President :

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Sir Hugh Smiley, Bt.

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THE JANE AUSTEN SOCIETY

Report for the year 1973

Membership

There were 112 new members during the year, of whom 14 became Life Members, as did four old members. Membership now stands at 1,288.

Members are reminded that subscriptions are due on January 1st and that this Report is the only reminder that they will receive. The Hon. Secretary would much appreciate prompt payment of the 50p Annual Subscription, and will gladly provide a Banker's Order Form.

Annual General Meeting

The Annual General Meeting was held at Chawton House, by permission of Major and Mrs. Edward Knight, on Saturday, 21st July. Lord David Cecil presided, and nearly 300 members were present, together with over 200 guests.

The minutes of the last Annual Meeting were taken as read.

The Hon. Secretary presented the Report for 1972. This was seconded by Mr. J. H. Olsen and carried. The Rector of Chawton made an appeal for funds for repairs to the roof of St. Nicholas' Church, in support of a notice which had been sent out with those for the Annual Meeting. He was presented with a cheque for £50 from the funds of the Society. Towards the end of the year the Society was informed that over £400 had been subscribed by members.

The Hon. Treasurer, Mr. C. A. Jenkins, presented the accounts. These were seconded by Mrs. J. K. Ley, and carried. Mr. Jenkins had been promoted from his appointment as Manager of Lloyds Bank, Alton, and was making his last appearance with the Society. The President presented him with a cigarette lighter, in gratitude for the work he had done as Hon. Treasurer since 1965.

Mr. Ralph Dutton proposed the re-election of Lord David Cecil as President, of Mr. John Gore as Vice-President and Sir Hugh Smiley, Bt., as Chairman. This was seconded by Kathleen, Lady Scott, and carried.

The President proposed that the Committee be re-elected en bloc.

The meeting was addressed by Miss Joan Hassall, R.E., F.S.I.A., who described her work as an illustrator and wood engraver.

A vote of thanks was proposed by Mr. Henry Burke, seconded by Mrs. J. M. Lane, and carried.

The President closed the meeting by thanking Major and Mrs. Edward Knight for once again lending Chawton House for the meeting.

Annual General Meeting, 1974

The Annual General Meeting will be held at Chawton House, by permission of Major and Mrs. Edward Knight, on Saturday, 20th July. The meeting will be addressed by Mr. C. B. Hogan, Research Associate in English at Yale University. In 1950 Mr. Hogan published *Jane Austen and her Early Public*. His major publications are *Shakespeare in the Theatre 1701-1800*, in two volumes (1952 and 1957), and three volumes covering the years 1776-1800, of a series of eleven volumes on *The London Stage 1660-1800*.

Mrs. Edward Knight, who has organised the teas at the Annual Meeting every year, with one exception, since the meeting was first held at Chawton House in 1956, is unable to continue to do this. It will therefore be necessary to employ a caterer. Members are warned that the cost may well be doubled. We would like to record our gratitude to Mrs. Knight for all the work she has done for us over the past years.

Bicentenary, 1975

The Committee hopes to arrange a loan exhibition at Jane Austen's House during the Summer of 1975. The Hon. Secretary would gladly hear of any objects closely connected with the Austen family which their owners would be kind enough to lend for this occasion.

The Committee is arranging a concert of contemporary music, with readings from the novels, which will be held, it is hoped, in Winchester.

New Exhibits

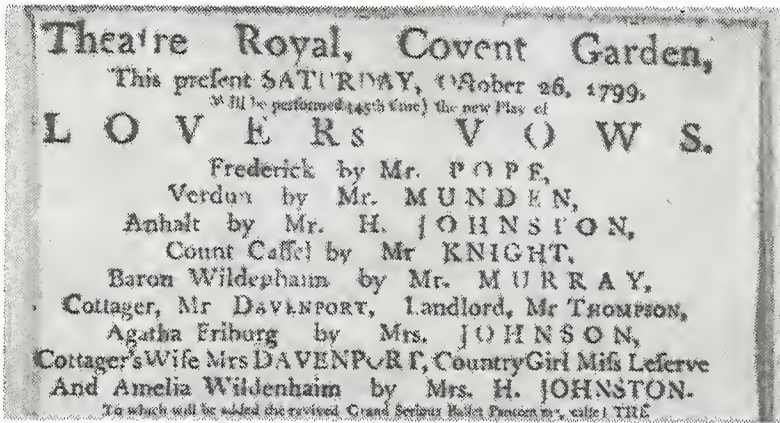
Miss Helen Wilder has given a turquoise and seed pearl bracelet, which belonged to Jane Austen. It was given to Miss Wilder by her cousin Mary Augusta Austen-Leigh, author of the memoirs of her father James Edward Austen-Leigh, and Jane Austen's great niece.

Miss Helen Holcroft has given a late nineteenth century water colour of Kippington in Kent. Kippington belonged to her ancestor Francis Motley Austen (1747-1815), once the owner of the Zoffany portrait, the subject of an article in this Report, and was sold by his grandson, John Francis Austen, who died in 1893.



Kippington, Kent
(see *New Exhibits and The Zoffany Portrait*)

Lovers' Vows



From the *Lady's Magazine* (Vol. XXIX) for October, 1798, p. 437

ACCOUNT of the new PLAY, called 'LOVERS' VOWS,' performed, for the first Time, on Thursday, 11th October, at the Theatre Royal, Covent Garden

THIS play is a free translation, we understand, by Mrs. Inchbald, from the German of Kotzebue, who, by the applause with which this piece was received, has obtained a second triumph on the English stage.

The following are the *dramatis personae*:

Baron Wildenham	Mr. Murray
Frederic	Mr. Pope
Count Cassel	Mr. Knight
Anhalt	Mr. Johnston
Butler	Mr. Munden
Hubert	Mr. Powell
Agatha	Mrs. Johnson
Amelia Wildenham	Mrs. Johnston

In its structure, 'Lovers' Vows' very much resembles 'The Stranger' by the same author, of which it partakes both the beauties and the defects. It has many scenes that are rendered weak, and in some degree uninteresting, by their unnecessary length, a prodigality of sorrow, and **repeated** tales of distress; but it has others (as the tears of the audience abundantly manifested) that touch some of the finest chords of sensibility, and make the most powerful and irresistible attacks on the heart.

Of the plot, which is simple, the following is a rough outline:

Baron Wildenham, when a young man, had seduced and abandoned Agatha. She bore him a son, and for twenty years she and the youth remained unnoticed by, and unknown to, the father. He had married and settled in Alsace; but having lost his wife, he had returned to his own estate with his daughter Amelia, and, touched with remorse, had commissioned Anhalt, the tutor of his daughter, to seek out the unfortunate Agatha. At the same time her son Frederic, who had been serving in the army, returned and found his mother starving. He procures her an asylum in the cottage of a simple pair, Hubert and his wife, and goes forth to obtain, by begging, wherewith to sustain her life. He meets the baron and count Cassel, and begs their charity. The baron gives him a shilling, but he says it is not enough, and demands, to save a mother's life, a dollar. On being refused, he draws his sword on his father; he is disarmed, and carried a prisoner to the castle. Here he discovers that the baron is his father, and the play ends in the baron's determination to make Agatha his wife. There is an episode which is interesting. Amelia is courted by count Cassel, a fop of the first water; but she loves Anhalt, her tutor, and is beloved by him. The *naïvete* of her character is enchanting, and is maintained with truth to the last.

In this drama there is no attempt at novelty of character; and it has this radical defect, that the *dénoûement* is completely anticipated in the second act; and yet, with these drawbacks on its claims to approbation, the scenes are so ingeniously wrought up, the language and the incidents are so conformable to nature, and, for the most part, so well calculated to promote the interests of morality, and the whole piece is so devoid of the flimsy trickery of most of the modern dramas, that it may be pronounced a most interesting and edifying production.

The base crime of female seduction, so destructive to the happiness of society, and so boundless in its fatal consequences, is held up in the most terrific colours to public horror and execration.

If the author's object has been

'To discipline the fancy—to command
The heart and by familiar accents move
The soul,'——

he has succeeded to the utmost extent of his wishes. The fable is highly interesting, and the incidents succeed each other in natural progression. The sentiments are pure and edifying, and the moral instruction which they convey is of the most important kind. The affections are uniformly kept alive, and the passions moulded to the very bent of the original design. The mind is roused from the most torpid state of indifference, and compelled to sympathise in the melting effusions of sorrow, or to exult with fervent joy in the

vindication of distressed innocence. We are absolutely forced to take part in the respective interests, and enter into the motives and the 'cue for passion,' with which the characters are supposed to be animated.

On the comic parts of this piece (for it is a *mélange* of tragedy and comedy), much praise cannot justly be bestowed. The old rhyming butler, however, contrived now and then to dry the tears of the audience, and to stop the tide of sympathetic sorrow.

The fifth act is, without exception, worked up with more art and nature, and is more impressive in its termination, than any *dénouement* which the English stage has hitherto furnished. This happy combination is more peculiarly entitled to panegyric, from the consideration, that we anticipate almost from the commencement which are to take place. The judicious variations of the passions, and the pure and simple workings of nature, amply compensate for any deficiency of interest in this respect.

We may confidently venture to predict, that 'Lovers' Vows' will be as popular a piece as any that has been represented at this theatre for some years past.

The script of *Lovers' Vows*, with a note and a preface, can be found at the end of the 1926 Clarendon Press edition by Dr. R. W. Chapman of *Mansfield Park*. The Society is indebted to Mr. Jocelyn Oliver for the discovery of this dramatic criticism.

Study and Research Group

In view of the considerable scholarly and research interest in Jane Austen and her times, it has been decided to set up a Study and Research Group which will act as a centre and clearing-house for information about Jane Austen research and studies, especially amongst University researchers and advanced students.

The Corresponding Secretary for the Group is Mr. Brian Southam, 4 Hillgate Place, London, W.8.

Pride and Prejudice

A Paper set by R. A. Austen Leigh

1. Who played at the following games and on what occasions:—Cassino, Vingt et Un, Quadrille, Lottery Tickets, Commerce, Piquet, Whist, Backgammon?
2. How many miles were (a) Netherfield from Meryton,
(b) Longbourne from Ashworth?
3. Who drove and on what occasions in a Barouche, Phaeton, Curricule, Chaise and Four, Hackney Coach?
4. Write short notes on the following:—Haggerston, Harriet Harrington, The Boulanger, Mr. Stone, Sarah, Mrs. Nicholls, Miss Grantly, Chamberlayne.

5. Give the day of the week of the month in which Jane Bennet rode over to dine at Netherfield.
6. Where did the Gouldings live. How many of them dined on one occasion at Longfield?
7. Write a note on Mr. Webb's income.
8. Give the names of any book or newspaper mentioned.
9. How long had Mrs. Reynolds been housekeeper at Pemberley?
10. What sum of money would Eliza Bennet have at the death of her parents? Compare it with the sum Mr. Bennet said Lydia would one day get.
11. What was Mr. Darcy's christian name?

This paper was given by Mr. Edward Marsh to Miss Joan Hassall, who thought Members would be amused by it. No prizes are offered for correct answers.

The Zoffany Portrait

In the Appendix to his *Jane Austen, Facts and Problems* (the Clarendon Press, Oxford, reprinted 1949), Dr. R. W. Chapman wrote:—‘A “portrait of Jane Austen the Novelist by Zoffany” was reproduced by Lord Brabourne in 1884 and (having been cleaned in the interval) in the *Life* of 1912. It had a pedigree (see *Life*, p. 63) that any layman might think watertight; but it cannot be Jane Austen. It is a portrait of a young girl which can be dated by the costume to about 1805 (when J.A. was thirty) or later.’

Dr. Chapman is referring to:—*Jane Austen, Her Life and Letters* by W. and R. A. Austen-Leigh (Smith Elder 1913) where the pedigree of the portrait is given as follows:—The portrait was given by a Dr. Newman, a fellow of Magdalen College, Cambridge, to the Rev. John Morland Rice (1823–1897), Rector of Bramber, Sussex, also a fellow of Magdalen College; who had been told by Dr. Newman that the portrait was painted in Bath when Jane Austen was about fifteen. Morland Rice was the third son of Edward Royds Rice of Dane Court, Kent, by his wife Elizabeth, daughter of Edward Knight of Godmersham and Chawton, Jane Austen's brother, and great-great-uncle of Mr. Henry Rice, the present owner of the portrait.

A few months before his death, Dr. Newman wrote to his friend Dr. Bloxham, sending him a picture as a farewell present, and adding: ‘I have another picture that I wish to go to your neighbour, Morland Rice. It is a portrait of Jane Austen the novelist, by Zoffany. The picture was given to my stepmother by her friend Colonel Austen of Kippington, Kent, because she was a great admirer of her works.’ Colonel Thomas Austen (1775–1859) was a son of Thomas Motley Austen of Kippington, (1747–1815) who had a daughter Jane, who in 1797 married William John Campion



of Danny, Sussex. Thus, a confusion between the two Janes could have arisen. But, as Mr. Henry Rice writes, there was never any doubt in Morland Rice's mind that it was Jane Austen the novelist, and since his mother Elizabeth was Jane Austen's niece it seems unlikely that with all the contemporary family evidence, he should have been wrong.

Zoffany returned to England from India in 1790, the year of Jane Austen's fifteenth birthday, and she is believed to have stayed in Bath with her uncle, Dr. E. Cooper, D.D., who had married Mrs. Austen's sister Jane Leigh, and who died in 1792.

Dr. Chapman's doubts regarding the date for the costume are shared by Mrs. Doris Langley Moore and by Miss Anne Buck, formerly Keeper of the City of Manchester Gallery of English Costume. Mrs. Langley Moore compares the portrait with Hoppner's portrait of ten-year-old Miss Milbanke, painted in 1802, particularly as regards the hair style, cut short and close to the head with some fringe on the forehead, whereas in 1790 the hair was made to look voluminous and generally curly. Miss Buck does not think that a girl of fifteen would be wearing such a dress in 1790-1, and compares the portrait with a painting in the National Portrait Gallery of Ann and Jane Taylor, 1791. She suggests that if the style of the dress in this portrait is compared with that in the Austen portrait, the difference is apparent, though the same general description could be given to both. Miss Buck does not think that the very high waistline was evident, except in the case of very small children, until the turn of the century, and she also compares the Austen portrait with Hoppner's Miss Milbanke. Mr. John Kerslake of the National Portrait Gallery goes so far as to compare the costume with that in a portrait by Sir Thomas Lawrence exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1818.

The Committee of the Jane Austen Society have come to the conclusion that, so far as they are concerned, the opinion of the authorities on costume must be considered as overwhelming.

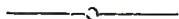
Though, on the face of it, the opinion of the members of Jane Austen's family in favour of the portrait's being Jane Austen is a very strong argument, the Committee feel that there are three considerations against it to be taken into account:—

First, and as they think, of decisive importance, is the evidence of the dress. Secondly, the possible and even probable confusion, as mentioned above, of Jane Austen with her cousin Jane, the daughter of Thomas Motley Austen. The Austen race produced a very strong family likeness, and without having to hand any certified portrait of Jane (Motley) Austen to contradict the idea, or any note of the year of her birth, it seems allowable to think that the picture of one little girl might well be mistaken for that of

the other, especially as both were called Jane Austen. Thirdly, is the experience many of us have had, which will be confirmed by the authorities of the National Portrait Gallery, of the genuine but unfounded conviction held by families of a distinguished person, that a picture or relic in their possession represents or was owned by that person. Dr. Chapman was shown a little silver tea-equipage with what appeared to be a water-tight pedigree saying that it had been Jane Austen's personal possession; on examination the hall-mark proved to be of 1832.

When societies owe so much to family tradition, it is a matter of some awkwardness not to accept it, but the Committee feel that they should put on record that they have come to this conclusion.

They would very much like to learn something more about Dr. Newman.



Jane Austen in Bath

Copies of *Jane Austen in Bath*, by Jean Freeman, can be obtained from: The Selborne Bookshop, Alton, Hampshire.

Price: 33p (post free).

On Illustrating Jane Austen's Works

Address given by Miss Joan Hassall at the Annual Meeting

I will begin with a few general ideas on illustrating books of an earlier period than ones own, such as pass through my mind before commencing the special studies for the work. These studies are not only of costume, furniture, architecture and so on, but the inner moods and probabilities of the book in question. Perhaps to a non-artist it seems rather a fuss to be so precise, and, I must confess, to be so critical of other people's performances; but I have been fortunate in this respect that all the books I have illustrated have been those I cared about passionately, be they poetry, Jane Austen, Mrs. Gaskell or Miss Mitford. Although chapter headings and endings may be in the nature of comments, the incidents in the text should be specific portrayals of people, places and things. I want to feel reasonably certain that this is the right sort of room for my friends of the book to be sitting in, or prospect for them to be admiring. And here I should like to say how boring it is to be confronted with a picture entitled 'The Prettiest Bonnet' or 'Carriages at the Door' drawn by an artist who has skimmed through the book without noticing very much on the way. In my researches through the illustrated editions in the British Museum, I was disappointed to find so many like this, in fact one might say that some of the editions could only have been promoted to give a well-known artist an excuse to produce some pictures in his recognisable style.

It is a fact that an artist cannot detach himself from the period in which he lives. However hard he persuades himself that everything is historically accurate, there is always a give-away somewhere even though it takes a later generation to see it. It is most often to be seen in the ladies' hair styles and a general flavour in the type of figure; and this is also true of theatre productions where Edwardian ladies, in carefully designed historic costume, have discarded neither hair-padding nor corsets. Nowadays we may pride ourselves on having more specialised knowledge, but I have a suspicion that future ages will be able to spot the date of our work by the 70-ish slant to which we ourselves are blind.

Another point to consider is that the fashion-plates of any period represent the height and ideal of any mode in its most pronounced form. The ladies who saw these prints would have had their stuffs made up by the local dress-maker in a very much less elegant way. Who has not seen old photographs of ancestral relations in their bunched rumpled clothes? The Queen of England, who might have been expected to have a good dress-maker, was likened to an untidy cabbage when she visited France in 1855; the French ladies thought her dowdy and old-fashioned, and her appearance was not enhanced by a vast satin bag embroidered with a poodle. In the same way, not many of us really look like the



Joan Hassall

Sense and Sensibility

The Folio Society



Joan Hassall

Mansfield Park

The Folio Society

modish dress advertisements of our own day. For this reason I have found it more helpful to look at contemporary prints, conversation pieces, portraits, and, above all, early children's books which so well show what the ordinary middling people wore, what rooms they lived in, and how they managed their curtains, etc. These rooms were often surprisingly bare and one wonders whether this was really so, or just that the artist did not take the trouble to engrave or paint more. One must not forget that furniture lasted a long time and was prized for generations so that it is foolish to illustrate an 1800-ish book entirely with 1800-ish furniture. Surely Mr. Woodhouse would have furnished his house on his marriage and never changed; and we know that Pemberley was somewhat stately, though not showy, by the special mention of the 'pretty sittingroom, lately fitted up with greater elegance and lightness than the apartments below, and they were informed that it was but just done to give pleasure to Miss Darcy.' Jane Austen herself makes the same point in comparing the Great House and Upper-cross Cottage. I am aware that these niceties may never be called into use but may be borne in mind. In a sense, each one of us is our own illustrator when we read a much loved book, and I find myself continually musing on these matters, the characters are so much part of life. If I see the name 'Tilney' or 'Knightley' among the deaths in a newspaper I find myself calculating whose great-grandson he might be until I admonish myself with a monitory shake of the head. It was when doing engravings for 'Cranford' that I first became aware of the overlapping of the periods in any one book, because we are told by Mary, an 1840-ish young lady, that Miss Jenkins still wore the fashions of her youth, Miss Matty was somewhat old-fashioned except in the important matter of caps, and the furniture was by implication from their father.

The earliest Edition of Jane Austen's Works I looked at, through the kindness of Miss Elizabeth Jenkins, was not strictly illustrated as it had only a steel-engraved frontispiece and title-page vignette by Pickering and Greatbatch, of *EMMA*, published in 1833 by Bentley, with 1830 fashions.

MANSFIELD PARK, published by Groombridge 1875 with colour wood engravings by Fawcett from watercolours by A. F. Lydon, was charming, with the pictures printed in four depths of mauvish grey. There were several pleasing romantic landscapes with small figures and then—I turned the page and there stood Henry Crawford in a runcible hat and heavy black beard looking exactly like Dante Gabriel Rossetti, addressing Fanny in a pork pie hat and flounces! Groombridge was an interesting publisher, who seems to have specialised in handsome books. I possess a 'Gems for the Poets' with the same artist and engraver.

William C. Cooke illustrated the complete Works in 1892 for Dent. These were small collotype pictures, three to a volume, with such unenterprising titles as 'Alone' and 'Elinor drawing.' I do not

think even Mr. Collins would have thought of standing on a footstool to propose.

Hugh Thompson's version came next in 1896, I am only mentioning the more notable editions, and shall not comment on the artists who are still living. I think most of us will know and love the Hugh Thompson drawings as they, and those of C. E. Brock (1909), have been frequently reprinted. I once possessed the 1908 edition in ten volumes, illustrated in colour by A. Wallis Mills who was an excellent 'Punch' artist for many years. Unfortunately I could not like these pictures and spent a long time perseveringly tearing out about fifty coloured plates,

Going back to 1898, I looked at 'EMMA' illustrated by Chris Hammond for Dent. These drawings were eminently respectable and accomplished, but the ladies, even Harriet Smith, appeared as tall, mannish women with determined chins and 90-ish hairstyle. In the Introduction to this book the writer refers to my favourite man, Mr. Knightley, as 'insufferable, and too commonplace and sensible to deserve our Emma.' There were other literary curiosities in the British Museum Catalogue such as an 'EMMA' **simplified and brought within the vocabulary of the New Method Reader;** and 'PRIDE AND PREJUDICE' **in a shortened form, retaining the language of the writer . . . a classic story from which the less important details have been excluded.** How can any Jane Austen detail be unimportant! The other illustrated editions are listed at the end of this paper.

I would now like to speak of my own wood-engravings to the Folio Society edition of Jane Austen's Novels with the Shorter Works, but first I will demonstrate how the pictures were produced.

Here I showed the box-wood block, an engraved block of Jane from Cassandra's drawing, the tools and the manner of their use, and drew attention to some prints from the blocks on the table.

There were seven volumes in this edition, of which I did one a year for seven years. Each had a frontispiece and eight or nine blocks in the text, also a binding paper, end papers, decorations on the spine and patterned bands for the chapter headings, this last group were done in the first year and remained constant. There were seven different small motifs interchangeable between the bands on the spine, and I tried so hard with great confusion of mind to work it so that they would not repeat on adjacent volumes; only years afterwards did I realise that people would not trouble to keep them in the same order, so it didn't matter anyway! The time factor has always been my trouble as I work slowly, so that although I enjoyed doing these books there were times when I bitterly regretted being unable to make alterations or corrections. Naturally the publishers found the time factor rather agonising too.



Joan Hassall

Pride and Prejudice

The Folio Society

The cover-paper design was adapted from a glazed cotton print of about 1800 given to me, with many others, from the patchwork bag of an old lady aged 99, and so also were the units of the chapter heading bands.

As may be imagined, with books so much loved and known almost by heart, it was hard to decide what episodes to illustrate. A book must be like a well-made cake with the currants evenly distributed; it would never do to have several pictures near together, so I used to put eight or nine markers at equal distances through the pages, and then see what choice incident came nearest to the slip of paper. Reverting to the British Museum books, I was astonished to see in such a richly illustratable story as 'PRIDE AND PREJUDICE' that the artist in 1934 had fixed on 'Mr. Bennet missed his second daughter exceedingly,' and there he lies on his front in a meadow, reading a book!

The first volume was 'PRIDE AND PREJUDICE' and I debated in my mind whether to do it in period when the first version was written, or when it was published. Remembering Mr. Bennet's reference to his powdering gown I decided on the former. (I noticed in the British Museum that the most recent versions have gone right back to Gainsborough and the Duchess of Devonshire style.) The only hazard connected with this book was that I was given the wrong dimensions for the frontispiece block so it had to go back to the blockmaker to have a piece of wood added at the top, causing a superabundance of leaves and branches. Perhaps *SENSE AND SENSIBILITY* was more successful because I was less tense and anxious about it, also the printing paper had a smoother surface and was kinder to the fine engraving. At the last minute I decided that the frontispiece would not do and recut the whole thing. *MANSFIELD PARK* presented no problems, unlike *NORTHANGER ABBEY* in which the difficulty was Catherine herself. At the beginning of the book we are told that she was 'plain, a thin awkward figure with lank hair and strong features. We read that her appearance improved greatly until her parents could say 'She is almost pretty today.' To fuss about a face may seem over-anxious, but to cut a face at all in the intractable material of box-wood is a chancy thing. A shave of wood can alter an expression or the slip of a tool may cause a squint! I wanted Catherine to be full of character without beauty and did *not* satisfy myself. Henry Tilney's 'Woodston' was adapted from a colour print by Lydon whom I have already mentioned; and Bath provided several settings.

For *PERSUASION* there was another visit to Bath, and to Lyme Regis. At the moment one sees the unrailed steps of the Cobb, the mechanics of Louisa's accident become quite clear, and I hope it is equally so in my picture. Winthrop was taken from a sketch I made not far from Lyme. Once again, as with *PRIDE AND PREJUDICE*, so with *EMMA* I became anxious and dis-

satisfied because of my strong affection for her, therefore it was a relief that the series could end on a reassuring note with the absurdities of the **SHORTER WORKS**. The tail-pieces, being more like comments, allowed one's fancy more freedom. The Steventon frontispiece was from a water-colour in Chawton Cottage, and Sanditon, in reverse, from a contemporary print of Lynmouth.

I hope these remarks on how an illustrator's mind works have been of interest. It was a great privilege to have had this commission, to which I owe the pleasure of speaking to the Jane Austen Society today. Thank you.

JOAN HASSALL.

The engravings reproduced in this Report are reproduced by kind permission of The Folio Society, and are taken from Joan Hassall's illustrations for The Folio Society set of Jane Austen's novels. Starting in 1957, and publishing one book each year, The Folio Society produced a complete set of Jane Austen—**Pride and Prejudice**, followed by **Sense and Sensibility** (1958), **Mansfield Park** (1959), **Northanger Abbey** (1960), **Persuasion** (1961), **Emma** (1962), and finally the **Shorter Works** in 1963. The series went out of print in 1969, and The Folio Society is now planning to re-issue the whole set in 1975. We hope to come to some arrangement so that our members will be able to buy these books, although they would normally only be available to members of The Folio Society.

Some Illustrated Editions in the British Museum Library

- 1833 **EMMA**—Bentley. Frontispiece and Title Page vignette by Pickering, engraved on steel by Greatbatch. No doubt there are others of the Novels in this series, but I have only seen this one.
- 1875 **MANSFIELD PARK**—Groombridge. Lovely wood engravings in four tones of grey by Fawcett after Lydon.
- 1892 **COMPLETE WORKS**—Dent. Three pictures to each volume by W. Cooke.
- 1895 **DUOLOGUES AND SCENES FROM THE NOVELS OF JANE AUSTEN**—Dent. Not very good pen drawings by Miss Fletcher.
- from
- 1896 **COMPLETE WORKS**—drawings by Hugh Thompson, often reprinted.
- 1898 **EMMA**—George Allen. Very fully illustrated by Chris Hammond, daughter of Henry Demain Hammond.
- 1898 **COMPLETE WORKS**—Dent. Very popular drawings by C. E. and H. M. Brock, reprinted many times.
- 1902 **PRIDE AND PREJUDICE** (from Complete works)—Dent. Drawings by Blanche McManus.

- 1908 COMPLETE WORKS—Chatto and Windus. Coloured pictures by A. Wallis Mills.
- 1909 COMPLETE WORKS—Dent. Coloured pictures by C. E. Brock.
- 1928 PERSUASION – Gerald Howe. Mannered drawings by Pearl Binder in green and brown.
- 1929 SENSE AND SENSIBILITY – Peter Davies. Very good pencil drawings inspired by Heideloff, by Vera Willoughby. Outstanding.
- 1930 PRIDE AND PREJUDICE – Collins, Pictures I did not like by Lex de Renault.
- 1933 PRIDE AND PREJUDICE – Dent. Brown ink drawings by Maximilien Vox.
- 1934 EMMA—Nelson. Very good drawings by Bessie Darling Inglis, also known for good flower studies.
- 1946 The Avalon Press seems to have issued a Complete Works done on different dates by different artists.
PERSUASION by John Austen was very mannered. What can be the meaning of ‘Captain Wentworth taking station?’
- 1948 NORTHANGER ABBEY—Avalon Press. Robert Austin.
- 1949 SENSE AND SENSIBILITY—Avalon Press. Blair Hughes Stanton.
- 1949 PRIDE AND PREJUDICE—Avalon Press B. Gordon Smith.
- 1949 PRIDE AND PREJUDICE—Winston Co., Philadelphia. An American Edition illustrated by D. Gorsline with single figures of varying periods, and good vignettes.
- 1954 PRIDE AND PREJUDICE—Nelson. Journalese drawings like cartoons by Carabine.
- 1958 COMPLETE WORKS, I saw SENSE AND SENSIBILITY —Macdonald. Pretty tinted drawings by Philip Gough.
- 1962 PRIDE AND PREJUDICE – Macmillan. Stylised drawings by Bernarda Bryson, with the strange affectation on nobody having eyeballs!
- 1968 PRIDE AND PREJUDICE—Heron Books. Vignetted pencil drawings by Sandra Archibald in Gainsborough period.
- 1957 to 1963 COMPLETE WORKS—Folio Society. Wood engravings by Joan Hassall.

There have also been Penguin issues with wood engravings by Gertrude Hermes, Helen Binyon and other fine artists. I did not look at any overseas editions except the Gorsline version.

The splendid Clarendon Press edition, edited by Dr. Chapman is illustrated with contemporary prints and fashion plates, not original work.



Joan Hassall

The Folio Society

THE JANE AUSTEN SOCIETY

Report for the Year, 1974



*Wedgwood Tureen,
from a dinner service owned by Major Edward Knight.*

Writing to her sister Cassandra from Henrietta Street, on 16 September, 1813, Jane Austen says "We then went to Wedgwoods where my Br. & Fanny chose a Dinner Set. — I beleive the pattern is a small - Lozenge in purple, between Lines of Narrow Gold ; - & it is to have the Crest."

THE JANE AUSTEN SOCIETY

(FOUNDED IN 1940 BY DOROTHY G. DARNELL)

President :

The Lord David Cecil, C.H.

Vice-President :

John Gore, Esq., C.V.O.

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THE JANE AUSTEN SOCIETY

Report for the Year 1974

Membership

There were 126 new members during the year, of whom 35 became Life Members, as did three old members. Membership now stands at 1,348.

Members are reminded that subscriptions are due on 1st January and that this Report is the only reminder that they will receive. The Hon. Secretary would much appreciate prompt payment of the 50p Annual Subscription, and will gladly provide a Banker's Order Form.

Annual General Meeting

The Annual General Meeting was held at Chawton House on Saturday, 20th July, by permission of Major and Mrs. Edward Knight. About 450 members and their friends were present. Lord David Cecil presided.

The minutes of the last Annual Meeting were taken as read.

The Hon. Secretary presented the Report for 1973. This was seconded by Mr. F. H. Isherwood, and carried.

Mr. R. J. J. Minett, making his first appearance as Hon. Treasurer, presented the accounts. These were seconded by Mr. S. Young, and carried.

Lieut.-Colonel Walter Serocold proposed the re-election of Lord David Cecil as President, of Mr. John Gore as Vice-President and of Sir Hugh Smiley, Bt., as Chairman. This was seconded by Mr. Philip Smiley, and carried.

The President proposed that the Committee be re-elected en bloc.

The meeting was addressed by Mr. C. B. Hogan, who took as the title of his talk "Lovers' Vows and Highbury". At the conclusion of his address Mr. Hogan presented the Society with the two topaz crosses, which had belonged to Cassandra and Jane Austen, together with the original letter (Chapman, No. 38), written by Jane Austen, from Bath, to her sister Cassandra, and dated Tuesday, 26th May (1801). In the letter she writes: "He (their brother Charles) has received 30£ for his share of the privateer and expects 10£ more—but of what avail is it to take prizes if he lays out the produce in presents to his sisters. He has been buying gold chains and topaze crosses for us;—he must be scolded". Charles Austen was at that time serving as Lieutenant of the *Endymion*, and took a prominent part in the capture of the *Scipio*. Mr. Hogan had given the crosses to Mrs. Hogan, who was also

present at the meeting, as a wedding present. He had written in 1966 to say that the crosses and the letter would be bequeathed to the Society, but the presentation came as a complete surprise to everyone, and was received with delight and considerable emotion by those present.

A vote of thanks was proposed by Professor Marcia Allentuck.

The President closed the meeting by thanking Major and Mrs. Knight for again lending Chawton House for the meeting.

Annual General Meeting 1975

The Annual General Meeting will be held at Chawton House, by permission of Major and Mrs. Edward Knight, on Saturday, 19th July. The meeting will be addressed by Dr. A. L. Rowse, Fellow of All Souls College, Oxford, who will speak on "The England of Jane Austen".

Bicentenary

The Loan Exhibition will take place at Jane Austen's House, Chawton, during the months of July and August.

A recital of contemporary music will be held in New Hall, Winchester College, by permission of the Warden, on the afternoon of Saturday, 6th September. Miss Ruth Dyson and Mr. Peter Hall will be among those taking part. Booking instructions will be sent with the notices for the Annual General Meeting.

Celebrations will be held at Steventon from Friday, 25th July, to Sunday, 27th July, as follows:

Friday, 25th July, 1975

Grand Birthday Ball at Oakley Hall, nr. Basingstoke, by kind invitation of Mr. and Mrs. Landon Platt. Period costume optional.

Saturday, 26th July 1975

Eighteenth Century Country Fair—Exhibitions, Craft Demonstrations, Costumes Competitions, Stalls, Sideshows, Displays, Drama Performances, Barbecue. Philatelic stand.

The Fair will take place on the site of Jane's childhood home, the Parsonage House.

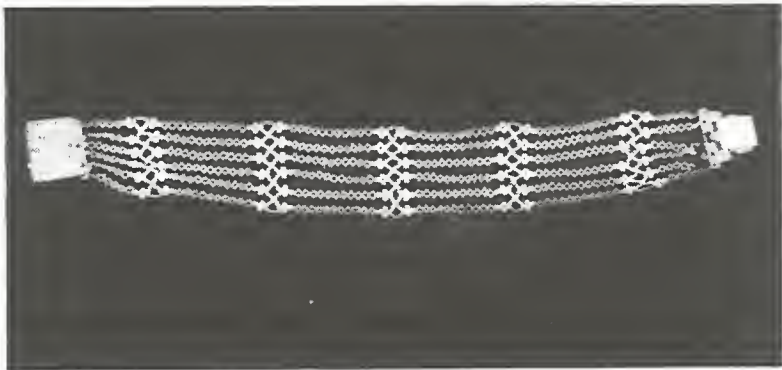
Sunday, 27th July, 1975

Special Services in St. Nicholas' Church. Floral Festivals in Churches of the United Benefice of Steventon North Waltham, Ashe, and Deane. Jane Austen's Country Walks. Drama Performance. Exhibitions. Teas.

Postal Quiz. Questions set by Committee members of the Jane Austen Society. Each entry must be accompanied by a fee of 20p. Entries will be opened on one day, the winner being the first all-correct entry opened. There will be a literary prize.

For further details of events please write to the Information Officer, Mrs. D. Irons, Southington Cottage, Overton, Basingstoke, Hampshire, enclosing a stamped addressed envelope.

The village of Chawton is arranging a special weekend programme from 18th July. The theme will be, 'Chawton - a village and its history.' Amongst other things it is anticipated that a permanent exhibition will be on view at the village hall during the period, it is hoped that there will be readings from 'Jane', a piece of theatre, based on the life, letters and literature of Jane Austen, by Joan Mason Hurley (nee Joan Austen-Leigh), on 19th July. Further information will be available shortly. In the first instance contact Anne Mallinson, Selborne Bookshop (Jane Austen County Bookshop) Selborne. Hants. Telephone: (042 050) 307 or Mr. Graham Willmott, Elm Cottage, Chawton. Alton. Hants. Telephone: (0420) 85198.



Turquoise Bracelet, given by Miss Helen Wilder in 1973.

Study and Research Group

In view of the considerable scholarly and research interest in Jane Austen and her times, it has been decided to set up a Study and Research Group which will act as a centre and clearing-house for information about Jane Austen research and studies, especially amongst University researchers and advanced students.

The Corresponding Secretary for the Group is Mr. Brian Southam, 4 Hillgate Place, London, W.8.

Jane Austen in Bath

Copies of *Jane Austen in Bath*, by Jean Freeman, can be obtained from: The Selborne Bookshop, Alton, Hampshire.

Price: 40p (post free), also their Bi-centenary book list (May) on receipt of S.A.E.

Henry Austen at Bentley

by the Rev. G. L. Russell, Rector of Bentley

Henry Austen's career, at any rate during its earlier stages, is marked by an erratic and impulsive character which has little in common with that of his famous sister. He was born in 1771, the fourth son of the Reverend George Austen; scholar of St. John's College, Oxford; lieutenant in the Oxford Militia in 1793, and captain and adjutant four years later. From 1807 to 1816 he was a partner, with Maunde and Tilson, in the bank established at 10 Henrietta Street, Covent Garden; and, with Gray and Vincent, in the bank at Alton which failed in 1816. So many "changes and chances" no doubt induced him to contemplate a more settled, if less remunerative, occupation. At any rate, in 1816 he was ordained (by the Bishop of Salisbury), and having served curacies at Chawton and Farnham, was licensed as Perpetual Curate of Bentley on 6th April 1824.

That he was not instituted as rector is a circumstance embedded in 700 years of history. In 1129 Henry of Blois, a brother of King Stephen, was appointed Bishop of Winchester. It was he who built Farnham Castle. He also established the archdeaconry of Surrey, and endowed it with the great tithes of Farnham and with all the tithes of Bentley, Frensham, Elstead and Seale, with the proviso that from them should be paid the stipend of a clergyman to minister in each parish. There was a further complication. The oversight of the four chapelries (as the parishes were then termed) was transferred from the vicar of Farnham to the Abbot of Waverley, an arrangement which continued until the Dissolution. During those 400 years, the archdeacon's agents paid to the Abbey the sums reserved for stipends, and the Abbot provided the clergy required.

For nearly 750 years the Bentley tithes, like the others, were the property of the archdeacons, who (from Reformation times onward) leased them to lay impropiators who had the duty of both appointing and paying a Perpetual Curate for the parish—a system which came to an end only in 1867, when Bishop Sumner promoted an Act of Parliament under which the leases died out, and the tithes were applied to the parish from which they had been collected.

The principal undertaking of Henry's curacy seems to have been the construction, in 1835, of the south aisle of the church to provide extra seats. Architecturally this was not a fortunate enterprise. The roof of the new aisle was supported on pillars of pitch-pine cut and painted to imitate *cast iron*, this being the material recommended by the archdeacon of the day! The episode had, however, an intriguing by-product—an exchange of letters between Henry and the Church Commissioners, he having discovered that it should be possible to recover duty paid upon building materials

used in the new work, since ecclesiastical properties were permitted to claim exemption. A letter from the Commissioners dated 27th January, 1836, includes the following sentence, which might easily be matched in any official correspondence of this sort at the present day: "I am directed by His Majesty's Commissioners to send you the accompanying Queries, and to request that after they have been answered and signed by the necessary Parties, you will return them to this office, for the consideration of the Board." Evidently the replies failed to give satisfaction; for on 10th March of the same year the following was addressed to the Curate:

"Sir, I have laid before His Majesty's Commissioners for building new Churches an Application from yourself and the Churchwardens of the Parish of Bentley, for a remission of the Duty on the Materials used in enlarging the Church of that Parish—and I am directed to acquaint you that the Board are disposed to recommend the case to the favorable (sic) consideration of the Lords of the Treasury, notwithstanding the Amount expended in such enlargement is under the sum of £400—but, they wish first to be informed how it is proposed to overcome the difficulty which arises from no Architect having been employed to superintend the work during its progress, who could certify at the bottom of the Builder's Affidavits that the Materials enumerated therein were actually used in the enlargement, which Certificate can only be dispensed with by the Commissioners of Customs and Excise under the special Warrant of the Lords of the Treasury".

Poor Henry! Apart from the obstacles and delays contrived by the Circumlocution Office, he seems to have won only grudging consent for his scheme from those most directly concerned. One of the parishioners to whom he appealed, replied as follows: "I shall not hazard an opinion as to the necessity of enlarging the Church, or enter into any remarks respecting your plan, that seems to be already settled. I presume you have the consent of the Landowners of the Parish, out of whose pockets the payment must eventually come." This, as it happens, was less than the truth. Henry persuaded his sister to subscribe, and added another £30 of his own—one quarter, or thereabouts, of his annual stipend, and more than either of his two wealthiest parishioners had contributed. But he pressed on with the business of recovering the duty paid—which may have been levied on imported material only, for in June 1836 he obtained from the timber merchants Browning & Co., with a wharf at Waterloo Bridge, a certificate of duty paid on "the timber you had from us (which) was out of the Boradina (sic) from Riga".

But alas for human contrivance! Henry's last attempt to build something solid and lasting fared no better than earlier ones had done. The south aisle was so ill-constructed (no doubt from "no Architect having been employed") that in fifty years' time it was

pulled down, "cast iron" pillars and all, and a more substantial edifice put in its place.

However, the last word shall be one that he penned to F. R. Thresher, of Marsh House, Bentley, on 1st December, 1836. "We have conquered the invincible—we have got money *out* of the Treasury. You and I ought to have a vote of thanks, if not a medal struck off!"

Martha Lloyd's Recipe for Pease Soup

Jane Austen wrote to Cassandra on 1st December, 1798,: "Mr. Lyford (the surgeon at Basingstoke) was here yesterday. He came while we were at dinner, and partook of our elegant entertainment. I was not ashamed at asking him to sit down to table, for we had some pease-soup, a sparerib, and a pudding."

Martha Lloyd, an old friend of the Austens, went to live with them after the death of her own mother in 1805. She shared their houses at Bath, Southampton and Chawton. It is from her recipe book, an old brown leather book with the recipes in her own handwriting, that the following recipe is taken.

Pease Soup

Take two quarts of pease. Boil them down to a pulp. Strain them. Put $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. of butter into a stew pan. Celery, $\frac{1}{2}$ onion, and stew them until tender. Then put two anchovies, powdered pepper, salt, mint and parsley (each a small handful) and spinach, and heat of each a small quantity. Half a spoonful of sugar. The soup to be boiled as thick as you like it, and the whole to be ground together, boiled up, and dished.

In 1828 Martha married Francis Austen as his second wife. Her youngest sister Mary married James Austen, as his second wife, in 1797.

Pug's Sex

by the Rev. A. W. Beer

Jane Austen is the most accurate of writers. What seems to be her solitary fall from grace—when Mr. Robert Martin's orchards are in blossom 'at nearly midsummer'—was, we know, siezed on gleefully by her family for that very reason. There is, however, a curious circumstance in Mansfield Park which has never, so far as I know, been commented on.

On page 74 (Chapman's edition) Lady Bertram says 'Sitting and calling to Pug, and trying to keep him from the flower-beds, was almost too much for me'. On page 80, when the visit is to be made to Sotherton, 'the carriage drove off amid the good wishes of the two remaining ladies, and the barking of pug in his mistress's



Lady Bertram with Fanny Price and Pug. (Hugh Thomson).

arms'. Finally, on page 333, Lady Bertram says : 'And I will tell you what, Fanny—which is more than I did for Maria—the next time pug has a litter you shall have a puppy'.

Pug has changed his sex!

Whilst it may be argued that when her ladyship says 'has a litter' she means 'sires a litter', this is surely not the common English usage? For myself, I think that Homer nodded. . . .

THE ZOFFANY PORTRAIT: A RE-APPRAISAL

"Oh, Elinor," Margaret cried, 'I have such a secret to tell you about Marianne. I am sure she will be married to Mr. Willoughby very soon.'

"You have said so," replied Elinor, "almost everyday since they first met on High-Church Down; and they had not known each other a week, I believe, before you were certain that Marianne wore his picture round her neck; but it turned out to be only the miniature of our great-uncle." (Sense and Sensibility. Chapter 12).

A portrait of Jane Austen the novelist, by Zoffany, was the subject of an article in the Society's Report for 1973; in this article the Committee of the Jane Austen Society, reluctantly, gave three reasons for their belief that the portrait cannot be Jane Austen:

- (1) The evidence of the dress.
- (2) A confusion between Jane and the daughter of Francis Motley Austen, also Jane Austen.
- (3) The genuine but unfounded conviction by families of a distinguished person, that a picture or relic in their possession represents or was owned by that person.

If we take these three reasons and examine them, we shall find that there are equally clear reasons for the portrait being accepted as of the authoress.

(1) **The evidence of the dress.** This is all important. In 1974 Mr. Henry Rice, the present owner of the portrait, states that he had it cleaned. In his Appendix on the portraits of Jane Austen (Facts & Problems, 1949), Dr. Chapman rejected the Zoffany portrait on the grounds that the costume must date from as late as 1805—not before—and this means Jane Austen would be about thirty in the portrait.

Mr. Patrick Rice, uncle of the present owner, in a letter of June 22nd, 1974, writes:

"My own impression is that, as sometimes happens, expert opinion is here open to question and that the shadow of Dr. Chapman's authority and too positive declaration against the traditional attribution has tended to obscure the more favourable aspects of the case"

James Laver writes in his book: *English Costume in the 18th Century*, page 84:

"In the middle nineties, or in extremely fashionable circles, just before, the short waist became the rage. The waist in fact, slipped up to immediately below the breasts and remained there for about twenty years. The materials used for dresses were very thin."

Jane was fifteen when the last known theatricals were performed at Steventon in January 1790. We know Jane, with Cassandra and their parents, visited her great-uncle, Francis Austen at Sevenoaks, Kent, in 1788. He was then over 90, and a widower. This was most probably Jane's first visit to Kent, and no doubt old Mr. Austen was much struck with Jane's intelligence and liveliness. After leaving Kent they visited Eliza, their cousin, recently returned from France. The material for the dress, made of the fashionable white spotted muslin, was perhaps a gift from old Mr. Francis Austen. The two girls and Eliza would talk of the latest Parisian fashions. A passage in *Mansfield Park* may represent a personal recollection:

" . . . The new dress that my uncle was so good as to give me on my cousin's marriage. I hope it is not too fine; but I thought I ought to wear it as soon as I could, and that I might not have such another opportunity all the winter. I hope you do not think me too fine."

"A woman can never be too fine while she is all in white. No, I see no finery about you; nothing but what is perfectly proper. Your gown seems very pretty. I like these glossy spots . . ."

Jane's cousin, Jane Cooper, was married from Steventon in December 1792—and Jane would perhaps wear her white dress then. She would keep her dress for special occasions, such as the portrait; for weddings; or for acting in the last play at Steventon. "The talent and liveliness which she would show, if ever she had an opportunity of acting herself, may be imagined." (*LIFE*, W. & R. A.-L.).

The locket worn in the Zoffany portrait is said to be of 18th century design. The passage from *Sense and Sensibility* quoted at the beginning of this article is also possibly from a personal recollection of Jane Austen's. The locket contained a miniature, most likely that of old Mr. Francis Austen of Sevenoaks, Jane's great-uncle and her father's guardian and benefactor—and husband of her godmother—who perhaps bequeathed the locket to Jane, her god-daughter, when she died. That Zoffany was the painter of the portrait seems very likely. The palm-tree, faintly visible on the left of the girl herself—denotes a canvas of the time of Johann Zoffany's Indian period—he was painting in India between 1783 and 1790. Most probably a good deal of his work was for the members of the Hon. East India Company's staff in the service in India and their families and friends. When he returned to England in 1790—

he had some old canvases, left over, with the palm tree painted on them. These were used by the artist in subsequent work—the palm tree being disguised with festoons of flowers in some cases (see correspondence between the Rice family and Miss Winifred Watson). The portrait may have been painted in Kent in the early 90's as Zoffany would have introductions to H. E. I. Company families and connections in the east of England (Kent, Essex and London), before working for other patrons in Bath and elsewhere. As a friend of Mrs. Hancock and her daughter, Eliza de Feuillide, the artists would find a lively and intelligent model for his painting, such as the girl in this portrait, of value to him in the early years of his return to England. Zoffany, who became an R.A. in 1769, was much admired for his conversation pieces and portraits—and painted for the stage in his pre-Indian period. The King, George III, especially commissioned him to paint Garrick, as he and the Queen were so pleased with his play "The Clandestine Marriage." This interest of Zoffany's in the theatre may also have brought the acting of the Austen family in the barn at Steventon, to his notice, through Eliza, or Jane's brothers, in the early period of his return.

(2) **A confusion between Jane** and the daughter of Francis Motley Austen, also Jane Austen.

This can be quickly disposed of by again quoting from Mr. Patrick Rice's letter:

" . . . It seems to me that the idea that the girl is the other Jane (Jane Motley) of the Austen family is unacceptable on two counts: first because we are told that this particular Jane was actually married in 1797 and may therefore be presumed to have been at least in her twenties in the period to which the dress in the portrait is assumed by the experts (Dr. Chapman, Mrs. D. Langley-Moore, Miss Buck), to belong. In other words we can't have it both ways; if the fashion of the dress precludes the one girl, it also disposes of the other. And also because, whatever confusion in the identity of the two cousins may have arisen at a later date, it is hardly conceivable that the Col. Austen who gave the picture to Dr. Newman's stepmother, could have made this mistake, if his own sister, the other Jane in the story, had really been its subject."

(3) **The genuine but unfounded** conviction held by families of a distinguished person, that a picture or relic, in their possession, represents or was owned by that person.

This is a vague statement. We know that when Col. Austen gave the portrait to Mrs. Newman it was definitely stated to be Jane Austen. Although certain of her novels had gone into three editions by 1818, she could in no sense be thought of as a national classic as early as this; and even less so in the years afterwards—when her work was practically forgotten, almost up to 1892. (R. Brimley Johnson's edition of the novels). Mrs. Newman died in 1831,

before the collected edition of Bentley. It is as well to remind ourselves that Jane Austen's fame has only been widely acknowledged since the late 19th century, and the twentieth century. Before that she was read and admired only by the discerning few—from Sir Walter Scott and Archbishop Whatley in Ireland, onwards. But the attribution springs from a carefully noted ownership from the early 19th century before Jane was known. It is at this point that we shall do best to turn to this history of the ownership of the Zoffany portrait of Jane Austen and see how well it fits the known facts:

The Revd. Dr. Thomas Harding Newman, who bequeathed the picture back to a member of the Austen family, belonged to an old Essex family. His father was also Thomas Harding Newman of Nelves, Horncchurch, Essex born in 1779, and a former member of the Hon. East India Co.'s Service. His mother, Harriet, daughter of John Cartwright of Ixworth Abbey, Suffolk married Mr. Newman in 1810. She died in 1815, leaving a family of four young children: Thomas born 1811, Francis 1812 (d. 1817), Harriet 1813, and Benjamin 1815. Mr. Newman re-married, his second wife being Elizabeth, daughter of Thomas Hall, of Hollybush, Staffordshire, near Sudbury on the Derbyshire border, and near Hamstall Ridware, Edward Cooper's Staffordshire parish (Jane Austen's first cousin). Dr. Thomas Newman was thus a very young child when he lost his mother—only four years of age. So that Elizabeth Hall, his step-mother, would become very close to him and his brothers and sister. She is no doubt the Mrs. Newman who bequeathed the portrait to him—being a great admirer of Jane Austen and her works. The story of Elizabeth Newman's youth, would be too long to tell here, but some part of it may perhaps be found woven into the background of *Sense and Sensibility* and *Pride and Prejudice*, both first written in the 90's.

The Hall family were connected by marriage with an Irish family named O'Toole—a member of which was also in the H.E.I.C.S. Harriet Hall married Lorenzo O'Toole, and their son took the name of Hall—Lorenzo Kirkpatrick Hall. In a playful letter dated July 1813, Jane Austen writes to her brother, Capt. Francis Austen, HMS *Elephant*, Baltic:

“ . . . Our cousins Colonel Thomas Austen and Margaretta, are going Aid-de-camps to Ireland and Lord Whitworth goes in their train as Lord Lieutenant; good appointments for each . . . ” We can perhaps feel that, as Jane herself tells us in one of her letters to Cassandra dated November 1813, “I am read and admired in Ireland too . . . ” her cousin Col. Austen and his wife would speak of her to friends they met during his service in Ireland from 1813 till 1817. When he returned, in 1817, Mrs. Newman would receive the portrait, perhaps as a wedding gift at the time of her marriage to Mr. Newman. (We are told later by Dr. Newman “It had long

been in our family"). The second Mrs. Newman died in 1831. Mr. Newman married a third time in 1841. His wife was Anna Maria Parry, daughter of John Parry of Donnington Priory, near Newbury, Berkshire. The third Mrs. Newman died in 1872 at the age of 90 years. At the time of this last marriage of his father, Dr. Newman was at Oxford, already embarked on his academic career and was thirty years of age. Perhaps it is not so likely he would have known her so well, especially as she lived at Speen in her widowhood and not at Nelmes, the Newman's family home in Essex, Mr. Newman having died in 1856.

Dr. Thomas Newman inherited the family property when his father died, and appointed his nephew (son of his younger brother Benjamin Harding Newman, Captain in the 20th Regiment), Benjamin H. Newman, as his heir. Benjamin's mother was Anne Lefroy Sadleir a daughter of Elizabeth Lefroy, one of the "Miss Irish Lefroys" as Jane used to call them, and the same branch of the Lefroy family as her old flame, Tom Lefroy. Of Jane's early love affair with Tom Lefroy we have her own mentoins of it in her letters, written when she was nineteen or twenty years of age. These letters were unknown to her biographer, James Edward Austen-Leigh. But his sister, Caroline, as an elderly lady, wrote to him—with "some heat" as Dr. Chapman says :

"I think I need not warn **you** against raking up that old story of the still living Chief Justice. That there was something in it is true—but nothing out of the common way—(as **I** believe). Nothing to call ill-usage, and no very serious sorrow endured. The York Lefroys got up a very strong version of it all, and spread their own notions in the family . . . there was **NO** engagement, and never **HAD** been . . ." Perhaps we may feel Caroline protests a bit too warmly for the Yorkshire Lefroys to be as wrong as she suggests. Certainly the new heir of Nelmes would have heard of Jane Austen from his mother and his grandmother—and even from the Lord Chief Justice himself.

Mr. Benjamin Newman would be in complete agreement that the portrait of Jane Austen should go back to one of her own family, after his uncle's death. This was most probably suggested by Colonel Austen all those years before—when, in 1817 (the year of Jane Austen's death) he came back from Ireland, on his retirement from the Army—and gave it to Mrs. (Elizabeth Hall) Newman. Col. Austen's wife was Margaretta, née Morland, and at the birth of a son to Elizabeth Rice (Jane's niece and a daughter of Edward Austen Knight), in 1823, she possibly was the little boy's god-mother. for he was baptised John Morland Rice. He became a Fellow of Magdalen, Oxford, and Doctor of Divinity. Dr. Newman was also at Magdalen, becoming Dean of his college; another friend of these two men at Magdalen was John Bloxham also a Fellow and the historian of Magdalen college. Bloxham had been

Cardinal John Henry Newman's curate, in early Oxford days, at Littlemore. John Morland Rice became Rector of Bramber cum Botolphs, in Sussex in 1864, at the same time as Bloxham became Rector of the adjoining parish of Upper Beeding.

Dr. John Morland Rice was Rector for 33 years, dying in 1897 aged 74 years. He lived at the Rectory—a Regency style house on the Steyning road—some long way from the church. It is now called Burletts, and is privately owned. The Rector of the combined benefice of Bramber with Upper Beeding lives at the latter village. Standing in the still secluded garden—with its trees and with squirrels and black rabbits tame about the lawn in front—one can imagine the grace and charm the Zoffany portrait of his great-aunt, Jane Austen—must have given to the drawing-room, in the Victorian days of John Morland Rice, as it hung over the mantelpiece of his Rectory at Bramber in Sussex.

Constance Pilgrim.



East Window, St. Nicholas' Church, Steventon.

LOVERS' VOWS AND Highbury

Address to the Jane Austen Society, 20th July, 1974

by Charles Beecher Hogan

I

I do not wish to deal in improbabilities. And yet, one may rightly ask, what imaginable connection is there between **Lovers' Vows** and **Highbury**? Certainly a production of that play would never have reduced to shambles Mr. Woodhouse's tranquil drawing room. Certainly Mr. Woodhouse would have been thoroughly miserable ever to see his dear Emma acting, and twice as miserable to see her acting in something that dealt so outspokenly with the fruits of seduction. Possibly, nay, it is very likely that Mr. Weston, seduction to the contrary, would eagerly further a scheme that entailed theatricals. So, without doubt, would Frank Churchill. And there would be plenty of people to take part, **Highbury** being a largish town, and Mrs. Elton would pooh-pooh her abilities as an actress, even though at **Maple Grove** she had often been considered very great.

No, I do not intend to take refuge in any schoolgirl fantasies of this nature. But, nevertheless, the connection between **Lovers' Vows** and **Highbury** does exist. It is of a moral nature, and has to do with a moral problem which, I am convinced, deeply interested and perhaps even troubled Jane Austen in the years that saw the composition of **Mansfield Park** and **Emma**. To this problem I shall return presently.

I want first to speak of **Highbury** itself. The novel of which it is the locality is in several ways unique. It is the only book Jane Austen ever wrote whose action takes place within a town. Otherwise, as we all know, the scene is invariably a country house: **Longbourne**, **Northanger Abbey**, **Barton** and the others. That scene does, of course, shift from time to time to London or Bath and, in one of the most remarkable passages Jane Austen ever wrote, to **Portsmouth**. But nowhere else save in **Emma** is the action so exclusively confined to one particular place. Everything in that novel, except for one disastrous afternoon, occurs in **Highbury** itself.

That **Highbury** is a moderately large town, and not a village, cannot be doubted. All the evidence points to that fact. Indeed, as Dr. Chapman has remarked in his edition of the novel, "The topography of **Highbury** is given in such detail that many attempts have been made to construct a map. I have not found it possible to do this with certainty; the indications are just not sufficient." This implies that it was a town of some size, although it is of course pointless to hazard a guess as to what its population actually was. But it is of interest to note that the cast of characters in **Emma**, whether active or silent, is far and away the most extensive in any one of the

novels. In other words, Jane Austen has let us believe that Highbury did have a reasonably large population.

Now why is all this? Why, for once and for once only, did Jane Austen make use of a town and not a country seat? Was she a bit tired of writing so constantly about those seats; did she merely want a change? Far from it. Of all the novelists in English fiction one feels with Jane Austen the most secure. She knew exactly what she was doing and exactly what to do with it.

I remarked earlier that *Emma* has certain unique qualities. In addition to the ones I have just referred to, *Emma* is the only one of the six novels whose title bears the name of its principal personage. As we all know, two of the others are place names, and three represent attributes, or, as it were, frames of mind. And once again, in entitling this novel as she did Jane Austen was wholly aware of why she did so. She had a reason, and it was the right reason.

The novel *Emma* is Emma Woodhouse. Everything revolves about her. She, if I may say so, revolves about everything: her concerns, her interests, her feelings, and above all, her absorption in herself as being, in the life of Highbury, its most important resident. This is her own considered opinion of herself, and it is the opinion—Mr. Knightley to the contrary—of everybody else.

Here, then, we see the reason for Highbury itself. Could the all pervasive quality of self-esteem so characteristic of this fascinating young woman be displayed anywhere near so effectively in other surroundings? I think not. A city would be far too large, a country house would be far too small. Emma needed a larger kingdom. In a town of Highbury's size she could rule without dispute. There she could always be first. To be first in a largish community does have its satisfactions, indeed its glories. This fact Jane Austen well knew, and she well knew its perils. The art with which she shows Emma as the acknowledged, as well as the self-acknowledged, queen of that community is incomparable. But no less so is the art that leads Emma to, and then rescues her from, a situation that could have had profoundly serious consequences.

In Highbury no one could imagine such a catastrophe. Not, that is, with Emma in charge. All of them—the Westons, the Bateses, the Coles, Harriet Smith, certainly dear old Mr. Woodhouse, hopelessly imperceptive as he is—willingly let her go her own way. Emma triumphs over Mrs. Elton, even though the battle appears, for a while, to be drawn. And even Mr. Knightley, the only one who ever grasps the truth, as well as the perils of Emma's position and her own attitude toward that position, doesn't really interfere: he merely cajoles and warns. All of Highbury submits.



Mr. C. Beecher Hogan and Lord David Cecil with the 'Topaze Crosses.'
20th July 1974. *(Photo. Kimroy)*

II

To turn now from the Surrey that Mrs. Elton considered unanswerably to be "the garden of England" to the Northamptonshire the existence of whose hedgerows Jane Austen begged her sister to make inquiries about. But in **Mansfield Park** there are, as it were, no hedgerows anywhere. Except on two memorable occasions—the day at Sotherton and Fanny's visit to Portsmouth—we remain indoors. The streets, the lanes, the neighbouring countryside of Highbury that we have come to know so well have been left far behind. Everybody and everything is inclosed—inclosed as nowhere else in anything Jane Austen ever wrote. The interaction of character on character in this remarkable novel is very close, and, as in **Emma**, the perils and the dangers remain acute.

In passing may I refer briefly to the way in which this novel has, in the past, been received. For a great many years it was to most readers something of a puzzle, as, perhaps, to many readers it still remains. There seemed a darkness in it; there was little laughter; it was close to being almost sinister. Of recent years, however, this attitude has sharply changed, and it can be said that **Mansfield Park** has received and is now receiving rather more critical attention and commentary than anything else in the canon of Jane Austen's work. Its intense concentration and, to use the familiar cliché, its "problem" make to our modern thinking a very strong appeal.

And this "problem" exists in its clearest manifestation in what underlies Jane Austen's choice of investing her personages with so strong a sense of isolation. This strangely remote, almost inbred society decides to act a play.

Lovers' Vows, which was first performed in October 1798, is an adaptation by Elizabeth Inchbald of a play by the popular German dramatist Kotzebue entitled **Das Kind der Liebe**. "The Love Child" was supposedly a bit too outspoken a title for the taste of certain theatregoers—a large number of whom, by the way, were busily providing innumerable children of that very description for their posterity. And therefore Mrs. Inchbald settled on an innocuous name that could in fact be bestowed on almost any work of fiction written in almost any language.

By the standards of to-day this play isn't, of course, in any way remarkable. Its plot is hackneyed, its outcome obvious, its characters mere types, or better, stereotypes. But it does fit into and conform with the framework of that small, tight world that lives in Sir Thomas Bertram's house. Each of the characters in **Lovers' Vows**, wooden as they are, do bear certain fleeting resemblances to the persons who are to enact them. The love scenes have the same fleeting resemblances to the situations in which those same persons find themselves involved. Jane Austen did, in other words, choose well.

I would, therefore, like to outline the play as a whole, in order to show its relationship to the Mansfield Park actors.

Its theme is the restoration of lovers to their proper partners. Agatha (Maria Bertram), some years before the play begins, had been seduced by Baron Wildenhaim. The Love Child is Frederick (Crawford). Agatha has latterly fallen into penury, and has returned to the village where she formerly lived and near which is the Baron's castle. Frederick, now a soldier, conveniently arrives in search of his birth certificate, which, alas, does not exist, he being, as his mother tells him, a natural son. The rest of the act is a scene of much affectionate reconciliation and weeping and hugging—all of which is to Maria a matter of infinite satisfaction. In other words, here is revealed to us the true statement of her infatuation with Henry Crawford. It will be remembered that when the actors hear the news of Sir Thomas's unexpected return from his travels Maria and Crawford, in rehearsal, are holding hands, and that their hands remain clasped, to Maria's intoxicated delight, for some time thereafter.

The next act brings other arrivals. Baron Wildenhaim, now a widower, and his (this time) legitimate child Amelia have returned to the Castle. A guest has also arrived, one Count Cassel, whom the Baron wants Amelia to marry. Here we have further resemblances. The Baron (Yates) is the "heavy" in the play, with the long-winded speeches Yates so loved to declaim. Amelia is given to plain and playful speaking, much in the manner of her representative (Mary Crawford), and Cassel (Rushworth) is altogether as addle-pated as is Rushworth himself.

But may I here interject a rebuttal of something that perhaps seems too much stressed in my pointing out all these connections. Jane Austen knew well enough that in this play the triviality of the characters did not, could not, exactly mirror the lives, fortunes and wishes of each individual performer. But the resemblances, imprecise as they may be, are nevertheless present. Be it remembered that the so-called "guilty" persons in the novel are the ones who are to portray the guilty persons in the play. Jane Austen had, I repeat, her reasons.

The action continues with the disclosure that Amelia cares nothing for Cassel, but is in love with her tutor, the Reverend Mr. Anhalt, a part which Miss Crawford archly suggests would be exactly right for Edmund, and Edmund in his infatuation with Mary does consent, albeit reluctantly, to undertake it.

In Act III the tension mounts. The Baron goes shooting, and is met by Frederick who, on behalf of his mother, begs for money. What the Baron gives him is insufficient, and the desperate young man assaults him, whereupon Frederick is led to the Castle and imprisoned. A scene ensues between Amelia and Anhalt—the

scene which Fanny so dreads even to think about and which causes her such agony to see rehearsed—the scene in which their love is avowed.

Act IV finds Amelia bringing food and drink to Frederick in his prison, and she presently reveals to him the name of their mutual father. The young man, with the thought that he didn't actually kill him, is of course overwhelmed, and cries out, "Eternal Judge! thou dost not slumber!" But Anhalt is ready, as he always is, with the answer: Frederick must explain his entire history to the Baron. This he proceeds to do, and the Baron is thoroughly repentant.

The play then hastens to the denouement that has been more than apparent all the way from Act I. Count Cassel is discredited because he too has seduced a young lady. This news is revealed by the low comedy butler (acted by Tom), who tells the story in a preposterous series of jingling poetry.

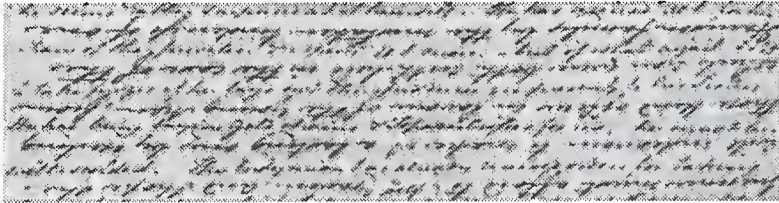
Count Cassel woo'd this maid so rare
And in her eyes found grace;
And if his purpose was not fair,
It probably was base.
For, ah! the very night before,
No prudent guard upon her,
The Count he gave her oaths a score,
And took in change her honour.

One is almost tempted to say that these silly verses, which the butler produces on several occasions, are the best things anywhere in the play. In its concluding scene Agatha comes to the Castle, and the faithful Anhalt convinces the Baron that he must marry her, and that Amelia must marry Anhalt himself, and in silence they all strike a pose with everybody leaning on and holding hands with everyone else. I may point out that this moment of adjustment and reconciliation the Mansfield Park actors had no opportunity to portray.

What Jane Austen's own attitude toward **Lovers' Vows** may have been we do not know, and that we should or shouldn't know is a matter of the least importance. What is of importance is that she must have chosen this particular play after careful deliberation. To her audience of 1814 it was without doubt relatively well known. It does contain exactly the right number of characters to fit the number of persons in the Mansfield household. Its simplicity of plot and language are well suited to the capabilities of amateurs. These considerations are, to be sure, plausible and proper. But let us look a little further.

I have already spoken of the not inconsiderable likeness existing between the personages of the play and the persons who were to represent them. Now the disruption of the whole scheme of the theatricals upon Sir Thomas's unexpected return occurs in the very

last sentence of the first volume of the original edition of **Mansfield Park**. Two thirds of the novel are still to come. And another stage is, as it were, set. The opening sentence of the last chapter of the last volume is "Let other pens dwell on guilt and misery." In **Lovers' Vows** the theme of guilt and of misery first comes to light. This play was Jane Austen's choice because, despite its happy ending, it deals with topics that speak of seduction, of faithlessness, of guilt, of misery. The stage is set. The play is to be performed by persons whose eventual actions are here, for the first time, adverted to.



Extract from Jane Austen's letter to Cassandra, dated 26th May, 1801 in which she tells of their brother Charles' gift of the 'Topaze Crosses'.

III

I have not, I hope, lingered too long on this play and on its consequences. What of Highbury? Is there here any connection at all with Highbury? I think there is a connection.

In the life of the young lady who is the central representative of that town there is indeed guilt. But it is only the guilt of remorse. Emma's discovery of the meaning of remorse, and at the same time the discovery of her true self, is of course the result of the famous moment on Box Hill when she insults Miss Bates. That moment is deservedly famous: inasmuch as Emma could not resist speaking as she did she is guilty, profoundly guilty. But in Highbury there is no misery. Emma herself is surrounded by people who are good people, who are warmly dependent on one another (even Mrs. Elton and her *cara sposo*). people who are considerate. Emma herself is all these things, even though they seem to be obscured—and to a certain extent are obscured—by her wish to be first, to be queen.

And yet these two novels are more than intimately linked one to the other. During those four years from February 1811 to March 1815—four of the most remarkable years in the history of the English novel—that saw successively the composition of **Mansfield Park** and **Emma** it seems to me that Jane Austen's mind was giving earnest thought to one trait universally common to human nature. To this trait I have already referred, when, you will recall, I spoke of it as a moral problem. In brief, what it amounts to is the meaning, and the consequences, of temptation.

Earnest thought . . . It was not, of course obsessive. No good novelist is ever obsessed by one idea exclusively. In both these particular novels, nevertheless, a large number of the characters, with one extraordinary exception, are indeed tempted. Temptation motivates the very wish to undertake the acting of *Lovers' Vows*, in full knowledge of what Sir Thomas would have said and done even had he returned after the play had in reality been performed. It underlies the subsequent actions of the Crawfords—those actions so clearly adumbrated in the texture of *Lovers' Vows* itself. It underlies the actions of Maria, of Julia and Yates; it even underlies the fascination of Edmund for Mary Crawford.

And in the later novel, what of the secret engagement between Frank Churchill and Jane Fairfax? Or, above all, the way in which its heroine, supreme in her little kingdom, is tempted again and again to do what she well knows is by no means for the best. It could be said, I think, that in *Mansfield Park* a group of persons act or try to act a play, something, that is, of a fictitious nature. Whereas in *Emma* another "play" is performed—a play invented by Emma herself, in which she can give rein to her fancies and to her dangerous temptations.

These temptations do lead, as I have said, to guilt, but, as regards the persons in the two novels whom we most admire, to eventual happiness and a truer realisation of self. Because, oddly enough, there is a further similarity here. This is the element of similarity between Fanny Price and Emma Woodhouse.

On the surface this statement may appear to be absurdly far-fetched. But Jane Austen's famous "bit (two inches wide) of ivory" did not lie merely on the surface. It probed deep; it was a scalpel. And deep in the personalities of these two young women we find the willingness, even the need, to find out the truth of their innermost natures. That their natures are dissimilar makes no difference, nor does their situation in life: one of them sprightly, rich, everywhere admired; the other reserved, virtually penniless, everywhere made use of.

In Emma's case we know that at heart she has steadiness and a true capacity for loving. Temptation led her astray. But when after Box Hill the light flooded in upon her she was in readiness. "How to understand," she says to herself, "the deceptions she had been thus practising on herself, and living under!", and later, "With insufferable vanity had she believed herself in the secret of everybody's feelings; with unpardonable arrogance proposed to arrange everybody's destiny," and still later that "every future winter of her life . . . would yet find her more rational, more acquainted with herself." It has always seemed to me that given much of what Emma says and does in the earlier part of the novel, our total acceptance of this her own acceptance constitutes one of the great triumphs of Jane Austen's art.

In Fanny's case, too, there is steadiness and lovingness. But she has been forced into so quiet, so exploited an existence that, in a way, even she was tempted to see no alleviation. The light, however, did dawn. In the midst of the sorrows that befell the Bertram family she did not, perhaps somewhat to our surprise, give way to helpless dismay. On the contrary, she never faltered. Everybody in that family turned to her. Edmund cries out that she is his "only comfort now." Lady Bertram repeats her son's words, "Dear Fanny! now I shall be comfortable." To Sir Thomas she "was indeed the daughter that he wanted." She came, therefore, to know, not merely to hope for, her strength and her purpose.

It is thus that Jane Austen makes of the individual she calls "my Fanny" a true individual. Too much has been written in derogation of Fanny Price. Too often has she been called silly and colourless and weak. Such a viewpoint entirely fails to see her as existing within the structure and setting of the work of art in which she appears. If she were in fact colourless and weak that structure would have been seriously imperilled. In more ways than one Jane Austen's bestowal upon Fanny of a gentleness and **seeming** pliability that are the vessels of steadiness and truth is, I think, as great a triumph as is our perfect knowledge of Emma's discovery of her own true self.

In the drama of **Lovers' Vows** that revealed the subsequent drama Fanny had to contend with, and in the drama of the small town the governing of which Emma had to contend with Jane Austen has revealed what temptation means. Her statement, such as all great artists make on like occasions, is that one faces it not to become better but to become wiser.

THE JANE AUSTEN SOCIETY

Report for the Year, 1975



Watercolour of Jane Austen, commissioned as a frontispiece for the Memoirs of 1869 by her nephew James Edward Austen-Leigh, and painted by Mr. Andrews of Maidenhead. The family considered that the sketch by Cassandra Austen, now in the National Portrait Gallery, was inadequate, and those who had known her contributed their own recollections of her features and colouring.

(Courtesy of Major Robert Jenkyns)

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THE JANE AUSTEN SOCIETY

Report for the Year 1975

Membership

This Bicentenary year brought a greatly increased membership. There were 233 new members, of whom 48 became Life Members, as did seven old members. Membership now stands at 1,536.

The first list of members, published in 1942, contains 90 members. Of these, ten remain.

Members are reminded that subscriptions are due on 1st January and that this Report is the only reminder that they will receive. The Hon. Secretary would much appreciate prompt payment of the 50p Annual Subscription, and will gladly provide a Banker's Order Form.

Annual General Meeting

The Annual General Meeting was held at Chawton House, by permission of Major and Mrs. Edward Knight, on Saturday, 19th July. Almost 500 members and their friends were present. Lord David Cecil presided.

The minutes of the last Annual Meeting were taken as read.

The Hon. Secretary presented the Report for 1974. This was seconded by Mrs. D. P. Willan, and carried.

The Hon. Treasurer presented the Accounts for 1974. This was seconded by Miss Helen Lefroy, and carried.

Mr. Henry Jenkyns proposed that Lord David Cecil be re-elected President, Mr. John Gore Vice-President, and Sir Hugh Smiley Chairman. This was seconded by Colonel E. J. C. Spanton, and carried.

The President proposed that the Committee be re-elected en bloc.

It was proposed by Mrs. K. A. Robbins, seconded by Lady Smiley, and carried, that Mr. David Gilson be elected to the Committee.

The meeting was addressed by Dr. A. L. Rowse, who spoke on "The England of Jane Austen".

A vote of thanks was proposed by Mrs. Joan Mason Hurley (née Austen-Leigh), seconded by Lt.-Cdr. Francis Austen, and carried.

The President closed the meeting by thanking Major and Mrs. Knight for lending Chawton House once more for the meeting.

Twelve descendants of Jane Austen's brothers were present at the meeting.

Annual General Meeting 1976

The Annual Meeting will be held at Chawton House, by permission of Major and Mrs. Edward Knight, on Saturday, 17th July, when the speaker will be Dr. T. A. Tanner, of King's College, Cambridge.



Winchester Cathedral, Sunday, 14th December

Bicentenary

The Bicentenary of Jane Austen's birth in 1775 aroused enormous interest. The occasion was celebrated by the Society by a Loan Exhibition at Jane Austen's House during July and August, described elsewhere in this Report; and by a Concert of Music from Jane Austen's Music Books. This was held, by permission of the Warden, in New Hall, Winchester College, on Saturday, 6th September, and was arranged by Mrs. Diana Shervington, who is descended from Jane Austen's brother Edward. Miss Ruth Dyson, Miss Marilyn Minns, Mr. Simon Marlow and Mr. Peter Hall took part.

In April the Chairman opened a Jane Austen Garden at Lyme Regis, when a sketch, adapted from Jane Austen's letter of 14th September, 1804, by Councillor Henry Chessell, Mayor of Lyme Regis, was performed.

In July, Winchester College presented 'Jane Austen's World', readings from the novels, letters and early writings. Chawton and Steventon held their celebrations later that month. Festivals were held at Cheltenham and Bath. In Canada Congresses were held at the Universities of Victoria and Alberta. Displays were arranged at many county libraries, especially in Hampshire. The British Library held an exhibition at the end of the year. The B.B.C. Television and Radio produced programmes on Jane Austen, and Southern Television produced a five-part series, "Jane Austen and her World", in which some members of the Society appeared.

At Evensong in Winchester Cathedral on 14th December, the Dean of Winchester preached commemorating Jane Austen, the President of the Society laid a wreath on her grave, and the Chairman read a lesson.

On 22nd October the Post Office issued a set of commemorative stamps. Designed by Barbara Brown, they show the following characters from the novels: Emma and Mr. Woodhouse (8½p), Catherine Morland (10p), Mr. Darcy (11p), and Mary and Henry Crawford (13p).



(Reproduced by permission of the National Postal Museum)

Steventon Postal Quiz

Prizes were awarded to the first four correct entries to be opened. The first prize was won by Mrs. Carling, and the next three by Commander C. H. A. Harper, Miss J. Tomlin and Miss Helen Brown.

Study and Research Group

In view of the considerable scholarly and research interest in Jane Austen and her times, it has been decided to set up a Study and Research Group which will act as a centre and clearing-house for information about Jane Austen research and studies, especially amongst University researchers and advanced students.

The Corresponding Secretary for the Group is Mr. Brian Southam, 4 Hillgate Place, London, W.8.

Jane Austen in Bath

Copies of Jane Austen in Bath, by Jean Freeman, can be obtained from: The Selborne Bookshop, Alton, Hampshire.

Price: 40p (post free).

Bicentenary Exhibition

The Jane Austen Society's chief contribution to the bicentenary celebrations took the form of a small but choice loan exhibition held at Jane Austen's House from 2nd July to 31st August. The 41 exhibits were arranged, mainly in showcases, in Mrs. Austen's Bedroom; entrance was included in the price of admission to the house, and a printed catalogue was on sale, to provide brief details of the exhibits and to serve as permanent record. Her Majesty the Queen lent from the Royal Library at Windsor Castle the dedication copy of the first edition of *Emma*, specially bound for the Prince Regent in red morocco gilt, at a cost of £1 4s. ('You will be pleased to hear', wrote Jane Austen to her publisher John Murray on 1st April, 1816, 'that I have received the Prince's Thanks for the handsome copy I sent him of *Emma*. Whatever he may think of my share of the Work, yours seems to have been quite right'—*Letters*, ed. R. W. Chapman, No. 127; the Prince Regent's thanks were in fact transmitted by his librarian, Rev. James Stanier Clarke, in a letter, Chapman No. 126a, also on show at Chawton). Apart from loans made by the Dean and Chapter of Winchester Cathedral, and items belonging to the Jane Austen Society, the Jane Austen Memorial Trust and members of the Lefroy family, the exhibits came from descendants of Jane Austen's brothers. These brothers, and their families, were represented by numerous miniatures and mementos (the latter including an inscribed naval sword presented to Captain Charles Austen in 1827 by Simón Bolívar); of greater artistic interest was a very fine, though tiny, miniature by John Smart of Jane Austen's aunt Mrs. Philadelphia Hancock (originally set in a ring). The novelist



Silhouette, inscribed on the back, Cassandra Austen. She is wearing a bonnet, with ribbons tied under the chin.

(Courtesy of the great-grandsons of Admiral Sir Francis Austen)

herself appeared in the rarely reproduced watercolour by "Mr. Andrews of Maidenhead", which forms the intermediate stage between Cassandra Austen's sketch of her sister (now in the National Portrait Gallery) and the engraved portrait frontispiece to the 1870 *Memoir* by J. E. Austen-Leigh; also on view were the much reproduced Zoffany portrait, the delightful back view of Jane Austen in a blue gown, seated on a bank (the watercolour by Cassandra familiar as the frontispiece to Dr. Chapman's edition of Jane Austen's letters), and a silhouette allegedly done by the

novelist herself in 1815. Of particular interest were the two topaz crosses given to Jane and Cassandra in 1801 by their brother Charles; these, with the letter of 26th May, 1801, in which Jane tells Cassandra of the gift (also on show) were given to the Jane Austen Society in 1974 by Mr. and Mrs. Charles Beecher Hogan. Other examples of Jane Austen's handwriting included the longer version of her lines on the death of her friend Mrs. Anne Lefroy, wife of the Rector of Ashe (with a manuscript copy by her of Mrs. Lefroy's obituary notice from *The Sun* of 21st December, 1804), and also, more important, the second volume of Jane Austen's juvenilia (familiar as *Love and Friendship*), open at the defence of Mary Queen of Scots in her burlesque 'History of England'. Cassandra Austen provided the medallion portraits which enliven this history; Cassandra too made for her brother Frank, after her sister's death, the little-known manuscript copy of *Sanditon* which was also on show. Jane Austen's reading was hinted at by the set of William Hayley's *Poems and plays*, 1785, bearing her name, and by two sadly mutilated children's books once hers (a collection of French fables, and a chapbook *Goody Two-Shoes*); also present were a copy of *Elegant Extracts* inscribed by Jane Austen in 1801 to her niece Anna Austen (later Lefroy), and one similarly inscribed of Ann Murry's *Mentoria; or, The young ladies' instructor*, 2nd ed., London, 1780.

David Gilson.

Catalogues of the Exhibition can be obtained from the Hon. Secretary in exchange for two 6½p stamps.

The Hon. Secretary would like to record his most grateful thanks to Miss Rosamund Allwood and Miss Hester Bury, from the Victoria and Albert Museum, for their immense help in arranging the Exhibition—their professionalism prevented an amateur shambles.

THE DONWELL ABBEY STRAWBERRIES

When Emma and the others assembled round the Donwell Abbey strawberry beds on that hot June day to pick strawberries, just what did they gather? It is possible, from the clues in Mrs. Elton's monologue, to be certain beyond reasonable doubt.

She mentions three varieties of strawberry, 'hautboy'—infinitely superior but very scarce, 'Chili', which she says is preferred and 'white wood', the finest flavoured one of all. We know that *'Emma'* was written in 1814/15 and this period coincided with a revolution in the cultivation of strawberries in Europe and Mrs. Elton's remarks, disconnected and contradictory as they are, provide evidence of this.

For centuries prior to the end of the eighteenth century, only the two native European wild strawberries had been eaten, at first gathered from naturally occurring plants in the woods and later from those taken into cultivation. All the efforts of plant improvers had failed to increase the size of the fruits much beyond what could be expected from the naturally occurring plants. The larger of these two European species, *Fragaria moschata* is still commonly called 'hautboy' or more properly 'hautbois'. It has a distinctive flavour of musk unique among strawberries. This species was always rarer, both in the wild and in cultivation, than the other European species, *Fragaria vesca*. *Fragaria vesca* in its variety *semperflorens* is still grown in some private gardens, though not commercially, as the 'Alpine' or 'Remontant' strawberry. There is a white fruited variety of the plant which can be none other than Mrs. Elton's 'white wood'. Both *F. moschata* and *F. vesca* eat rather drily and the fruits are tiny and laborious to gather.

In about 1790 in a garden near Paris, some plants of *Fragaria virginiana*, a strawberry found in the Eastern United States, accidentally hybridised with plants of *Fragaria chiloensis* imported, as the name implies, from Chile, or in the spelling of the day, Chili. These hybrids produced fruit of such size and succulence that they were immediately recognised as being by far superior to any variety grown up until then. Some plants were sent to England and descendants of these were the ancestors of all our present-day commercial varieties.

There are still a few people who grow, if not 'white wood', then the normal red variety, but 'hautboy' seems to have died out of cultivation completely in spite of its superior flavour. The preferred 'Chili' must have been making considerable headway in ousting the older varieties by the second decade of the nineteenth century. A few years later a strawberry gathering party at Donwell would probably have been picking nothing else.

J. W. Martin.

Anna Lefroy's Description of Steventon Rectory in the Rev. George Austen's time

The Rectory House at Steventon had been of the most miserable description, but in the possession of my Grand Father it became a tolerably roomy and convenient habitation. He added, and improved; walled in a good kitchen garden, and planted out the east wind—so that in those times, Steventon came to be considered a very comfortable family residence. It stood in the valley, on the right hand side of the road leading to Popham Lane, and fronting the north. Behind, on the sunny side of the house, was an enclosed garden, bounded by a straight row of spruce Firs, and Terrace walk of turf. At one end this Terrace communicated by

a small gate with what was termed. "the Wood Walk", which, winding through clumps of underwood, and over hung by tall Elm trees, skirted the upper side of the "Home Meadow". At the other end of the Terrace a door in the garden wall opened to a lane that climbed the hill, and led through field, or hedge row to the Church—"the little spireless frame

Just seen above the woody lane".

It led also to the old Gabled Manor House, the remnant, as has been supposed, of a more splendid edifice; but whether part or whole, it was, and is, beautifully picturesque in position, form, and colouring—

"Manor House, converted to a Farm
Whose pointed Gabel, & stacked Chimneys rise
Above coeval Sycamore and Elm,
The cawing rooks abode". . . .

But I must return for a moment to the garden Terrace where two features have been left unnoticed; near the wood walk gate, and garden bench adjoining, was placed a tall white pole surmounted by a weather cock. How pleasant to childish ears was the scrooping sound of that weather cock, moved by the summer breeze! how tall its stem! and yet how much more stupendous was the height of the solitary silver Fir that grew at the opposite end of the Terrace, and near the Church road door! How exquisitely sweet too the Honeysuckle which climbed a little way up its lofty stem!

The lower Bow window, looking so cheerfully into the sunny garden, up the middle grass walk ordered with strawberry beds, to the sundial, belonged to my Gnd Father's study; his own exclusive property, & safe from the bustle of all household cares. The Dining, or common sitting room looked to the front, & was lighted by two casement windows; on the same side, the principal door of the house opened into a parlour of smaller size. Visitors, it may be presumed were few and rare; but not a whit the less welcome would they have been to my Grand Mother on account of their finding her seated in this very entrance parlour, busily engaged with her needle, in making or repairing.

This room, the Dressing room, as they were pleased to call it, communicated with one of smaller size where my two Aunts slept: I remember the common looking carpet, with its chocolate ground that covered the floor, and some portions of the furniture. A painted press, with shelves above for books, that stood with its back to the wall next the Bedroom, and opposite the fireplace; my Aunt Jane's Pianoforte—and above all, on a table between the windows, above which hung a looking glass, 2 Tunbridge ware work boxes of oval shape, fitted up with ivory bands containing reels for silk—yard measures &c. I thought them beautiful, & so perhaps in their day, & their degree they were.

But the charm of the room, with its scanty furniture and



Steventon Rectory, drawn by Anna Lefroy

cheaply papered walls, must have been, for those old enough to understand it, the flow of native homebred wit with all the fun & nonsense of a clever family who had but little intercourse with the outer world. Here too, in all probability, were first read, if not first written, the two earliest of my Aunt Jane's complete & published works, *Sense and Sensibility* and *Pride & Prejudice*.

House, Room, and Talent, have alike departed!

In later times, one of the Bed chambers, that over the Dining room, was plainly fitted up, & converted into a sort of Drawing room: but this transformation did not occur till my Gnd Father & Gnd Mother had reared a goodly family of children; all, with one exception, happily endowed by nature/bright of mind, & comely of person. Not probably till my two Aunts, Cassandra and Jane had completed their short course of schooling at Mad. Latournelle's, and were living at home as grown up young Ladies.

This description is taken from a red leather-bound manuscript book, written by Jane Anna Elizabeth, daughter of Jane Austen's eldest brother, the Rev. James Austen. She married the Rev. Benjamin Lefroy, Rector of Ashe, in 1814, and would have known Steventon Rectory both in her grandparent's day and later when her father became Rector of Steventon.

The book also contains a watercolour drawing—a back view of Jane Austen, wearing a bonnet and sitting on a bank—by her sister Cassandra, signed C.E.A. 1804. This book was on view at the Loan Exhibition, and was lent by great-grandsons of Admiral Sir Francis Austen, by whose permission this extract is reproduced.

JANE AUSTEN AND THE STATE OF THE NATION

Jane Austen, we all know, says next to nothing about the major historical events of her time. All the same, there is good reason to think that she read the papers, kept up with what was going on and cared about topical accuracy in her novels. The early ones are plainly happening in the seventeen-nineties, not in the Regency period strictly speaking—1811–1820—when they were published: each belongs to its own years of writing—*Pride and Prejudice* 1796–7, *Sense and Sensibility* 1797–8, *Northanger Abbey* 1798–9.

When Jane Bennet rode over to Netherfield to dine with Miss Bingley and her sister, the weather turned to rain and she had to stay the night (*Pride and Prejudice* ch. vii). Her mother hoped this might happen and urged that she should ride; Jane would rather have used the coach but there was the difficulty, too, of the carriage horses being wanted on the farm. Now, Mr. Bennet had never saved money: he expected to have a son who, on coming of age, would agree to break the entail on the estate, enabling

provision to be made for his sisters; and after he had given up hope he continued to spend to the limit of his income, checking Mrs. Bennet just sufficiently to keep out of debt (ch. 1). He does not sound the sort of man to economize on carriage horses.

The assessed taxes constituted a sort of income tax: charges on certain forms of expenditure that were reasonably good indicators of income. Naturally they went up during the war. The horse tax, which had been raised from 40 shillings to 48, increased to 54 in June, 1797; by November, 1797, it was known that in the 1798 budget all the assessed taxes were to be **trebled** at one go. There was also at this time a drive to collect them more strictly, the Duke of Bedford being caught out for evasion and fined, he had declared 30 horses out of the 47 in his stables and only 26 menservants out of 51. The **Anti-Jacobin** gave him some very unfavourable publicity. It also had a sham letter (5th March, 1798) about victims of taxation, including a farmer who particularly complained "that the collector would not consider the horse which he used to hunt and course as one employed in husbandry, but assess it as one kept for pleasure".

This looks like the clue to Mr. Bennet; what people will not do for simple economy they will often do to save taxes, and here is a bit of (legitimate) tax avoidance: Mr. Bennet is succeeding in getting his carriage horses assessed as animals kept for husbandry.

When Colonel Brandon found out that Willoughby had seduced his young ward, Eliza Williams (and that would be in October, 1797), he challenged him to a duel; he told Elinor Dashwood about it the following January: "we met by appointment, he to defend, I to punish, his conduct". She was distressed that he should fancy this necessary "but to a man and a soldier she presumed not to censure it" (**Sense and Sensibility** ch. xxxi).

This is something outside Jane Austen's experience. Duelling was in decline; a correspondent in the **Anti-Jacobin** congratulates the nation on "the hourly decreasing practice of Duelling (7 May, 1798). though admittedly to another correspondent the "diminution of the vices of Gaming, Drunkenness and Duelling" seems "at best to be problematical" (2 July, 1798). But what is ever popular in fiction is the duel between two men in love with the same girl. Jane Austen gives something answering to this description: the two men are both in love with Marianne Dashwood. But here it is as it might happen in real life: a middle-aged man doing the extremely conventional thing—and fighting about another girl altogether. The point is lost unless a gentleman really fights in the given circumstances; and Jane would want evidence, she would not risk copying out of another novel.

She began writing the novels in November, 1797. That autumn, there was a scandal involving Colonel Robert King, second son of Lord Kingsborough, his sister Mary, about sixteen or seventeen,

and Colonel Henry Fitzgerald, the illegitimate son of Lady Kingsborough's dead brother. On Sunday 3 September, Mary King disappeared and was advertised for in *The Times*; Fitzgerald, a married man, had run off with her. He and Robert King fought in Hyde Park, Sunday, 1 October; they fired six shots apiece and neither was hit. King's second published a full account in *The Times*.

King's duel resembles Brandon's in that a colonel fights the seducer of his young female relative aged about sixteen, and neither wounds the other. The last point was surely not copied from a novel.

In March, 1799, at Northanger, Catherine Morland finds the mysterious manuscript in her bedroom cabinet; only it turns out to be a collection of washing-bills and the like (*Northanger Abbey* ch. xxii). Much later we learn about the gentleman whose negligent servant left them behind; he was in the line of inheritance to a Viscountcy and a fortune, and, having come into them, he marries Eleanor Tilney. He had stayed at Northanger on "a long visit", presumably in 1798 (ch. xxxi). One of his bills includes expenditure on "hair powder".

Jane Austen's writing life is the period during which gentlemen were giving up powdering their hair. A tax on hair powder in the budget of 1795 helped a decline already begun. The change in fashion became general but initially it was a sign of political sympathies, of being more or less of a republican: it was people like Mr. Fox who left off powdering, or the Duke of Bedford. The future Viscount is not to be called old-fashioned for using powder; he is following what is still normal practice, one still remarks on the fact when a gentleman does not powder. But this is a significant detail; it places him politically. Not a Foxite Whig, nor anything further to the left; he is a decent Tory gentleman whose marriage to Eleanor "I expect to give general satisfaction among all her acquaintance".

Muriel Smith.

THE ENGLAND OF JANE AUSTEN

Address given at the Annual General Meeting by
Dr. A. L. Rowse, Fellow of the British Academy.

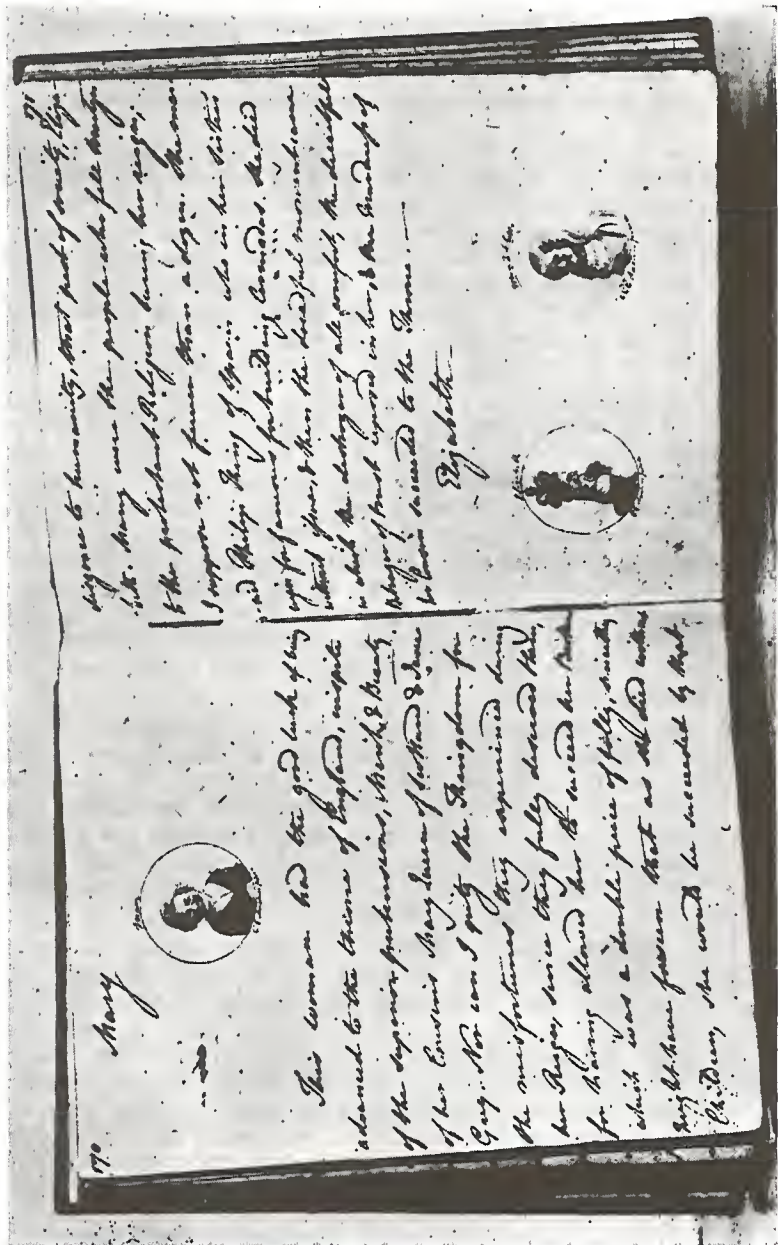
For an historian to be asked to deliver the Address on the occasion when we celebrate the second Centenary of Jane Austen's birth is a signal honour, but a somewhat daunting one—to confront all you experts knowing everything about her and her work, where I have no qualification. Or perhaps only one single qualification: I love both her and all her writing. Is that enough? If not, I also think that—when all is said, by the experts and the critics with their microscopic fault-finders, she remains of all English novelists—possibly of all our prose writers—the most perfect artist.

As a human being, the astonishing thing about her, I find, is the degree of her moral perfection. That may not recommend her in the moral confusion and disarray of our time—any more than the breakdown of standards in workmanship, craft, style, art of every kind recommends the perfection of her art: it renders it the less intelligible to contemporary society. In America, which has set the model for the spread of mass civilisation (if that is the word for it) everywhere, I am told that students at the universities no longer understand the complexities and subtleties of the articulated society she portrays. I can well believe it—too subtle, too refined and intelligent for them. But they can learn: a little intellectual effort is good for everybody.

As for us, everyone here will recognise the feeling, the expectancy of enjoyment, of pure pleasure when we take up one of her novels to read it again: the solace, the enchantment, the challenge of her wit and sheer cleverness, the amusement, the sparkle like champagne, the fun—and the acute disappointment, the chagrin when *Sanditon* breaks off unfinished, the author dead, at only forty-one. But what an achievement in the realm of art in that short time!—it is like Schubert or Mozart.

It is sometimes made a ground of complaint against her work that she does not deal with the heroic age in which she lived, the age of Napoleon and Wellington and Nelson, of Waterloo and Trafalgar. As it is sometimes remarked on with surprise that Shakespeare did not write about the Spanish Armada, the capture of Cadiz or Drake's Voyage round the World. But real writers write about what they know about, what speaks to their imagination, what appeals to their instinctive choices. In fact, to anyone who knows about the subject and has the perception to see, a great deal of Elizabethan society is present in Shakespeare's work; as much—a larger spread than is generally realised—of the society of late Georgian England, its world of experience and manners, its thought and its standards, is perfectly expressed by Jane Austen.

In many quarters today, not only in Communist countries but in our own delightful society in deliquescence, in demotic America



Pages from the manuscript of "Volume the Second", which includes Jane Austen's "History of England", written in 1791, with illustrations by her sister Cassandra. (Courtesy of Colonel E. J. C. Spanton)

and Britain—particularly with the kitchen-sink school of novelists and dramatists—Social Realism is held up as the objective and the test in literature and the arts. An historian is struck by the extraordinarily firm grasp Jane Austen has of the structure of society, and the truthful realism with which she renders it. If anyone is a Social Realist, she certainly is.

Of course she had the challenge of a subtly articulated society, with its varying shades and shadows, its cross rhythms and counter-rhythms, its conventions and rituals, to inspire her. A society of such a kind, hierarchical and ordered, but intricate and very varied, offers immeasurably more inspiration, more character and colour, to a novelist than a monochrome society—the more it approximates to a one-class society the more boring it is to a writer. This was the reason, we all know, why Henry James left 19th century America for Europe with its richer material for a novelist's imagination to work on. It is one reason why the novel in 19th century America is so thin and unsatisfactory compared with the pullulating richness of the French novel, Stendhal, Balzac, Flaubert, George Sand, Victor Hugo, Dumas, Zola. Or compare 19th century Russia, in the bad old days of the Tsars, with Tolstoy, Gogol, Dostoevsky, Turgeniev, Shchedrin, Goncharov, with the bare cupboard under the enlightened rule of Lenin and Stalin.

Jane Austen had the articulated society of late Georgian or Regency England to write about—in truth a more varied society, with far more shades and half-shades to it, than the disarticulated society of a Henry Miller or a Norman Mailer. An artist imposes his or her own limitations of choice on what they wish to write about—Jane Austen, a country lady of good family, tells us that she did not want to write about the sordid and the nasty. Norman Mailer called his novel of the War in the Pacific, **The Naked and the Dead**. Well—modern-minded and open-minded, we can agree that a butcher's shop, offers a subject for art—Annibale Carracci depicted one three centuries ago. But does one want to live in a butcher's shop, eat and drink in a butcher's shop—let alone make love in a butcher's shop?

It is no objection whatever to Jane Austen as a writer that she limits her field—limitation is the very condition of good art (something that contemporary artists do not seem to understand—even the Prince Regent's rather absurd Chaplain was inept enough to suggest to a perfect artist subjects completely out of her way). One of her strengths was that she knew to a T what she could do and what she could not. What the historian is suggesting is that her social range is much wider than is usually appreciated. She does not depict the nobility—but what a very small section of society that constituted. All through modern English history, from the 15th century to the social revolution of our time, the backbone of English society has been constituted by the country gentry, in every county and parish, with their affiliated middling classes in

trade and the professions; below them, the farming community and village life. Here is Jane Austen's field—from the point of view of social realism, the most significant territory for depiction, herself as a writer at the very centre of it. So, from the point of view of the social historian alone—apart from the perfection of her art—a most significant writer.

And there can be no doubt about the realism! The chief difference between her and professed realists is that, where they are apt to be crude, she is discriminating and subtle. If I did not love her, I should find her sheer cleverness terrifying: she never misses a point in character or conduct, she saw—and saw through—everything and everybody. But, of course, a subtly articulated society, with its codes and conventions, offers so much more to observe or make fun of, it is so much more varied and interesting. She is never taken in, she has no illusions; we might adapt as epigraph for her the celebrated *mot* of an improbable contemporary of hers, the former Bishop of Autun, Prince Talleyrand: 'Surtout point d'illusions'.

Take the rather *désabusé* beginning of *Persuasion*. Sir Walter Elliot is a baronet, of Somersetshire—the county communities are always clearly demarcated, by the way; his only book was the *Baronetage*, his favourite reading in it the pages describing 'the limited remnant of the earliest patents', followed by the story of his own family, when members of it served as high sheriff, members of Parliament, etc. The baronet has been living beyond his means; when forced to economise, he has no idea how to do so, 'without involving the loss of any indulgence of taste or pride'. Jane Austen well perceived the silly side of such persons in their social position: 'vanity was the beginning and the end of Sir Walter Elliot's character: vanity of person and of situation'.

Lady Russell, his neighbour, a good sort of person, sensible and well-bred, 'had a value for rank and consequence . . . herself the widow of only a knight, she gave the dignity of a baronet all its due'. Sir Walter is under the necessity of letting Kellynch Hall to an Admiral Croft, though he is by no means favourably inclined to the Navy, 'as being the means of bringing persons of obscure birth into undue distinction, and raising men to honours which their fathers and grandfathers never dreamt of'. The Admiral, having made his fortune in the Navy, takes Kellynch; Sir Walter is consoled by the thought that, "I have let my house to Admiral Croft" would sound very much better than to any mere Mr. A Mr. (save, perhaps, some half dozen in the nation) always needs a note of explanation. An admiral speaks his own consequence and, at the same time, can never make a baronet look small'.

The hero of the book is to be another naval person, Captain Wentworth. Sir Walter mistook the reference to him for Mr. Wentworth, the curate of Monkford. 'You misled me by the term *gentleman*. I thought you were speaking of some man of property.

Mr. Wentworth was nobody, I remember: quite unconnected: nothing to do with the Strafford family. One wonders how the names of our nobility become so common'.

Here, within a couple of pages, we see how firmly the niceties of the social structure, and the distinctions within it, are grasped—with no illusions as to its beauty: we are in fact told that Sir Walter was only half a fool. There is not only this in it, something very significant about the history of the time is adumbrated in it. We hear a great deal about how 'class-ridden' England was, in its great days, but in fact English society was always more flexible than on the Continent: one could move up in it, and also down.

The Navy was a grand way of making one's fortune; the Church was a good way; so were the other professions, the law and medicine. Sir Walter was quite right about the Navy bringing persons of obscure birth into notice—there was England's hero, Nelson, famous throughout the world: a poor clergyman's son. The father of the great Admiral Hawke was the grandson of a Cornish farmer. Sir Walter was much annoyed at having to yield precedence to a newly created Naval peer, whose father was only a country curate. In fact, many fortunes were made from prize-money in those prolonged wars, and I cannot recollect all the peerages: besides Hawke and Anson, Rodney and Nelson, there were two in the Somerset family of Hood (Bridport and Hood), St. Vincent, Collingwood, Exmouth, Gambier, Graves (but that was only an Irish peerage).

As for the Church, we see that an ordinary clergyman stood in rather an equivocal position—Sir Walter did not rate a curate as a gentleman. In fact, the Church was intimately articulated into the social structure, and men from all ranks, from the aristocracy downwards, served in it. We need not cite the names that come to mind among the Georgian episcopate—Manners, Keppel, Cornwallis, Lyttelton, Barrington, North, Egerton, Percy; the point I am making is the flexibility that yet obtained within the class-structure. Jane Austen's Archbishop of Canterbury was that admirable man, John Moore, son of a Gloucestershire grazier. We all know the fortunes made at the bar, often from small beginnings; many doctors did well too. The Regent's own doctor, Sir William Knighton, was born in humble circumstances in Devon, his mother an impoverished widow; taken care of by an uncle who was a country surgeon, Knighton first achieved success as an *accoucheur*—to become one of the most influential men in England as the Regent's confidant.

With regard to marriage, there is complete realism even to a fraction. Miss Maria Ward of Huntingdon was lucky to capture a baronet, Sir Thomas Bertram, with only £7,000—this was £3,000 'short of any equitable claim': so she was three-tenths below par. Marriage is the essential social knot, and therefore the crux of all the novels—not the exaggerated preoccupation of a maiden lady.

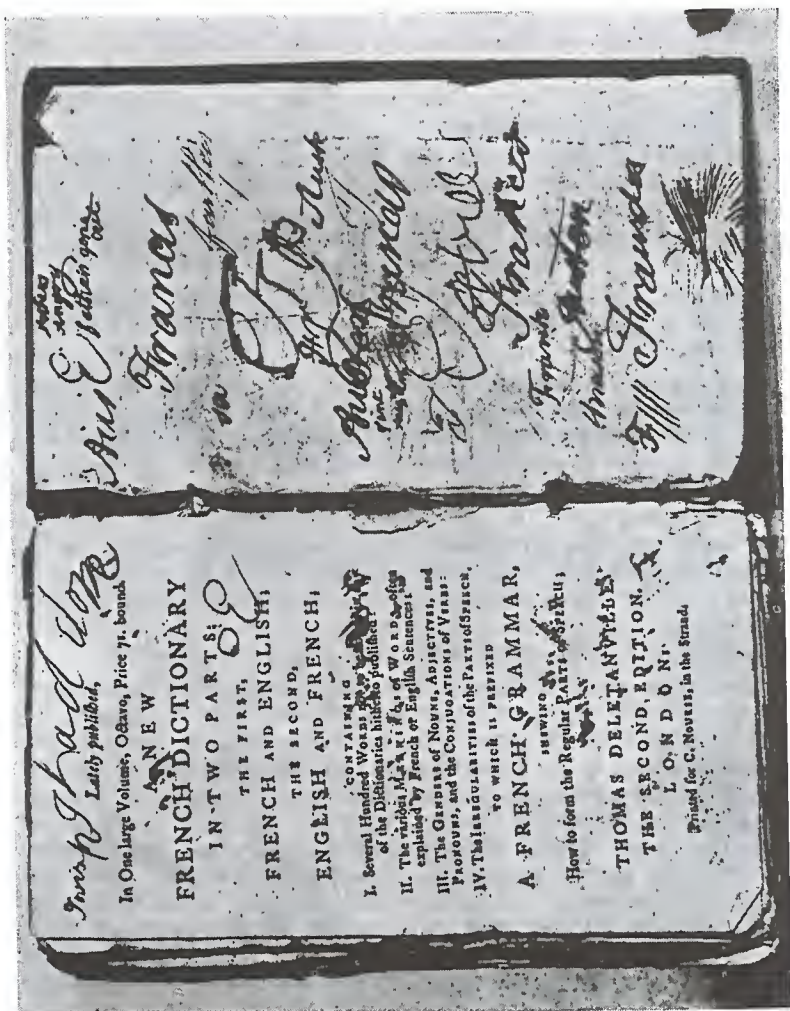
Jane Austen seems to have thought much as Shakespeare thought on the subject: Dr. Grant says, conclusively, 'I would have everybody marry, if they can do it properly; I do not like to have people throw themselves away; but everybody should marry as soon as they can do it to advantage'. Mr. Crawford considered that 'an engaged woman is always more agreeable than a disengaged. She is more satisfied with herself. Her cares are over, and she feels that she may exert all her powers of pleasing without suspicion. All is safe with a lady engaged; no harm can be done'.

On the other hand, it is his sister who doesn't mind if the man is taken in. 'Let him stand his chance and be taken in. Everybody is taken in at some period or other'. When her brother protests, she goes on, rather unreasonably: 'there is not one in a hundred of either sex who is not taken in when they marry. Look where I will, I see that it is so; and I feel that it **must** be so, when I consider that it is, of all transactions, the one in which people expect most from others, and are least honest themselves'.

We must not make a direct transference to Jane Austen, as if this were what she thought. We are on surer ground with the observation that 'Mrs. Musgrove and Mrs. Hayter were sisters. They had each had money, but their marriages had made a material difference in their degree of consequence'. For this is an observed social fact. Nor was her own attitude to marriage at all mercenary; she herself rejected a very eligible offer from a gentleman of estate whom she liked well enough, because—a sincere woman, of the highest principles—she felt she could not love him. The facts of social life are what they are: in a settled society settlements must be provided for, with propertied persons property enters in, a necessary provision for subsistence. Of all her heroines, it is usually held that Anne Elliot, of *Persuasion*, comes closest to her creator, who says of her: 'she had been forced into prudence in her youth, she learned romance as she grew older'.

Jane Austen's view of society was that of the rational 18th century; it stirs the imagination strangely to think that, with a reasonable expectation of life she should have lived into the Victorian age, and what more she might have written!

As it was—no illusions. Ladies' schooling at the time? Here is *Emma* (dedicated to the Prince Regent). 'Mrs. Goddard was the mistress of a School—not of a seminary, or an establishment, or anything which professed, in long sentences of refined nonsense, to combine liberal requirements with elegant morality upon new principles and new systems—and when young ladies for enormous pay might be screwed out of health and into vanity—but a real, honest, old-fashioned Boarding School, where a reasonable quantity of accomplishments were sold at a reasonable price, and where girls might be sent to be out of the way and scramble themselves into a little education, without any danger of coming back prodigies'.



A child's French primer of fables belonging to Jane Austen. Inscribed on outside front cover, probably by her father, "Miss Jane Austen, 5th Dec. 1783". On inside front cover "Jane Austen", written it is presumed by herself and on inside back cover "Mothers angry Fathers gone out" and "I wish I had done".

(Courtesy of the great-grandsons of Admiral Sir Francis Austen)

This seems to have been Jane's own schooling, quite sufficient for the purpose—as Shakespeare's country grammar school was sufficient for his. There is nothing mystifying about the matter—addicts of nonsense haven't the sense to see that men and women of genius educate themselves.

As for boys' schooling at the time, here she is on a July day in 1816—on the Winchester boys going home for summer holidays: 'We saw a countless number of post-chaises pass by yesterday morning—full of future heroes, legislators, fools and villains. . . .' Then, 'Oh, it rains again; it beats against the window'.

One's heart stands still: one is in the room with her. That is what it is to have genius—that acute sense of life and its reflection in words.

And M.P.'s, the legislators grown up? Any illusions about them? We know what she thought of them, for she is speaking in her own person in her **Letters**: Mr. Lushington 'is quite an M.P.—very smiling, with an exceeding good address and readiness of language. I am rather in love with him. I dare say he is ambitious and insincere'. And again, 'he puts me in mind of Mr. Dundas'. Dundas, we remember, was impeached for bribery and corruption on an enormous scale. We must remember that M.P.'s were not paid in those days for their devoted services to the well-being of their country; on the other hand, how many of those who so distinguish themselves today do so 'with an exceeding good address'?

Here is the place to observe how much the **Letters** illuminate the author of the works—as Shakespeare's verse-letters, the Sonnets, do him; and how much Jane's letters are recognisably one with the novelist. There is the same firmness and precision, the infallible eye for people, every quirk of personality, every detail of appearance, gesture, character. There are no more sprightly letters in our literature, even Horace Walpole's are not more so; and his were written with an eye to posterity and publication, hers were not. They are absolutely spontaneous and natural, herself humorous and witty, she couldn't help but be stylish in everything she wrote or did; they are sparkling with life—there is the hall-mark of genius always, the acute sense of life. Of course, between two ladies, Jane and Cassandra, there is a great deal of subtleties about women's clothes that I cannot fully comprehend; but I can understand the ships' sailings and movements, the background to Trafalgar not only implied, but actually there. (We recall that Admiral Croft in **Persuasion** had fought at Trafalgar.) Dr. Chapman is perfectly right in saying, 'Read with attention, they yield a picture of the life of the upper middle class of that time which is surely without a rival'. The historian can corroborate this excellent old scholar, and I could go on reading her letters for ever.

Critics have not always been so happy; Professor Garrod regarded them as 'a desert of trivialities punctuated by occasional oases of clever malice'. We see, as all too often, what asses critics

can be. Clever old silly as he was—I knew him—Jane was too clever for him; for the malice was often cleverer than he, with masculine impercipient, could perceive: it was in inverted commas, half ironical, to amuse Cassandra and herself. The golden rule in criticism is for the critic to be on a level with the author—that is why the 18th century Dr. Johnson is still the grandest critic of Shakespeare, and also why we can salutarily ignore 99% of the production of the critical industry. (No productivity troubles there!) On the whole, Jane Austen, in our time, has been fortunate in her critics—in the work of your President, in the admirable biography of Elizabeth Jenkins, and the judicious and penetrating book of Miss Lascelles, all on a par with their author in intelligence, unlike most critics. Even in her own day it was something to be appreciated by Walter Scott and Warren Hastings, and that remarkable connoisseur and man of taste, the Prince Regent—even if publishers were slow to publish (publishers sometimes make mistakes); very small editions of her novels were called for, and the general public couldn't see the difference between her and Mrs. Inchbald. Q.E.D.

Even though the intimate correspondence between two sisters has been bowdlerised a bit, we see at every point the realism of Jane Austen's mind, her outlook and her view of life without any illusions—my main theme. She knew the facts of life as well as any Pinter or Sillitoe or Samuel Beckett. 'I am proud to say that I have a very good eye at an Adulteress, for, though repeatedly assured that another in the same party was the *She*, I fixed upon the right one from the first. She was highly rouged, and looked rather quietly and contentedly silly than anything else'. That is Jane at twenty-six. Here she is at twenty. She wished to go to Greenwich to see one of her sailor brothers off, but had not heard whether the Pearsons could put her up, and 'if the Pearsons were not at home, I should inevitably fall a sacrifice to the arts of some fat Woman, who would make me drunk with small beer'. We see that Miss Austen was a Regency woman, not a Victorian. Can one imagine the portentous George Eliot writing anything so indelicate, though we know that the way she lived her life offered some points of contrast with the domestic life of Steventon and Chawton.

The so-called 'facts of life' make their appearance in the novels no less—in the Regency world they could be taken for granted: as the century progressed into the Victorian world, a writer had to be more careful. Illegitimate children occur, or are mentioned: they were more of a feature in upper class society in Regency days than today. There are seductions, like Willoughby's seduction and desertion of Eliza Williams, or the sordid elopement of Maria Bertram, Mr. Rushworth's wife, with Henry Crawford, which Miss Austen did not wish to explore further—it was not her subject; nor need we.

Our subject is the way of life of the age: the England of her time, is fully in our author—as the England of Elizabeth is in Shakespeare. The years between the outbreak of the French Revolution and Waterloo, coterminous with Jane Austen's active adult life, were an heroic period in our history, when first the revolutionary impulse from France spread beyond its boundaries and turned into aggression against other countries. A Liberal like Charles James Fox—a kind of aristocratic Aneurin Bevan—thought the outbreak of the Revolution the best news since Saratoga. Wordsworth, Coleridge and Southey, young men, saw in it the promise of a better world: they lived to be disillusioned. The person who had the imagination to foresee what it would all lead to was a man of conservative genius, Edmund Burke—i.e. to the military despotism of Napoleon. (Consider the leftist hopes of the Russian Revolution in 1917, and what that has led to!)

No such nonsense in the Letters of this sensible young woman: Jane Austen was a good patriot. Nor was she at all the recluse of popular imagination: she led a very active family life, the constant comings and goings of her sailor brothers, her numerous relations, like the Knights of rather grand Godmersham; enjoyed her share of social life, especially dances and balls when young, her visits around the country, changes of scene and residence, and would have liked more. In 1801 she envies the wives of soldiers and sailors in being near the sea and moving about.

We have naval news a-plenty—of those fleets that ultimately broke the power of both French Revolution and Napoleon, and preserved the liberties of Europe. In 1798 we learn that brother Frank is at Cadiz; Lord St. Vincent has left the fleet and gone to Gibraltar to fit out a privateering expedition against enemy ports, Minorca or Malta. The Letters are full of details of naval promotions, of the father writing on behalf of his sons to Lord Spencer at the Admiralty, Admiral Gambier, or the East India Company directors. Jane in 1798: 'The Lords of the Admiralty will have enough of our applications at present, for I hear from Charles that he has written to Lord Spencer himself to be removed. I am afraid his Serene Highness will be in a passion and order some of our heads to be cut off'. Shortly comes news of Frank's promotion to Captain—'Frank is made', the contemporary phrase for it; while Charles is to join the *Tamar* in the Downs.

In December that year Cassandra was at Godmersham supping with George III's sailor-son, Prince William (later William IV). Jane equates that with the purchase of a new muslin gown, 'both delightful circumstances'. For herself she has changed her mind about dressing her hat: 'I think it makes me look more like Lady Conyngham than it did before, which is all that one lives for now'. (Lady Conyngham was the Prince Regent's Egeria.) In November 1800 brother Frank is in the *Peterel* squadron off Cyprus for provisions; he went from Jaffa to Alexandria 'to wait the result

of the English proposals for the evacuation of Egypt'. That was the end of Bonaparte's dream of using Egypt as a springboard for the conquest of the gorgeous East.

Next year Charles spends three days in Lisbon, 'very well satisfied with their Royal Passenger—fat, jolly and affable, talks of Lady Augusta as his wife'. This was another of George III's all too numerous offspring, the Duke of Sussex. We will pursue Jane's naval bulletins no further; suffice it to say that her brothers Frank and Charles had highly successful long careers in the Navy. They both became Admirals—after her death, alas; we know what joy that would have given her—in 1808 Frank 'wants nothing but a good Prize to make him a perfect character'—and the biographies of both have been written. What is more to our point is that their sister proudly cites the names of Frank's old ships, with several others, in her novels: the *Elephant*, *Cleopatra*, *Endymion*.

Indeed I wonder if people fully appreciate the part that is played by naval personnel—to use Sir Winston Churchill's pseudonym in writing to President Roosevelt in 1939-40—in the novels. In *Mansfield Park* the very realistic account of the rather squalid home at Portsmouth of Fanny Price's parents, the seedy and drunken Lieutenant Price of the Marines, the description of the harbour, the berths of the ships, form a fine set-off to the inland grandeurs of the Park, Fanny's home with the Bertrams. In the second edition of the book a rather technical paragraph is inserted, about the sailing out of harbour of the *Thrush* and her sailing qualities, which perhaps Jane owed to one of her sailor brothers—as interested in her novels as she was in their ships. A speech of Admiral Crawford's niece, Mary, to Edmund Bertram should have been sufficient warning to him of the kind of woman she was.

"Do you know anything of my cousin's captain?" said Edmund, "Captain Marshall? You have a large acquaintance in the Navy, I conclude?"

"Among Admirals, large enough; but"—with an air of grandeur—"we know very little of the inferior ranks. Post-captains may be very good sort of men, but they do not belong to us. Of various admirals I could tell you a great deal; of them and their flags, and the gradation of their pay, and their bickerings and jealousies. Certainly my home at my uncle's brought me acquainted with a circle of admirals. Of *Rears*, and *Vices*, I saw enough. Now do not be suspecting me of a pun, I entreat".

Edmund again felt grave, and only replied, "It is a noble profession".

In *Persuasion*, though naval matters are more in the background, two of the leading characters are sailors, the hero Captain Wentworth, and his friend Captain Harville; we have too Admiral Croft and Lieutenant Berwick. We need go no further; the action takes place at Lyme Regis, Bath and elsewhere. We are amused to read

in the Letters some years before, during Jane's visit to Lyme Regis, a reference to a son and daughter-in-law of an Irish Viscount, 'bold, queer-looking people, just fit to be quality at Lyme'. At this same time Jane's aunt calls a sloop a frigate: 'never mind, let them puzzle on together'. Charles will go to the East Indies, 'and my aunt may do what she likes with her frigates'.

The Army makes no such figure in the foreground of her work—though officers of the Militia play no very heroic part in **Pride and Prejudice**—any more than it did effectively until the war began in the Peninsula. Then, with Sir John Moore's heroic retreat, her patriotism is aroused. In January 1809, 'the **St. Albans** may soon be off to bring home what may remain by this time of our poor Army, whose state seems dreadfully critical'. Next, 'this is grievous news from Spain. It is well that Dr. Moore was spared the knowledge of such a son's death'. Next, 'I am sorry to find that Sir John Moore has a mother living; but though a very heroic son . . . I wish Sir John had united something of the Christian with the hero in his death'. There we are admitted into the privacy of her inner beliefs. Her clerical brother wrote of her, 'she was thoroughly religious and devout; fearful of giving offence to God, and incapable of feeling it towards any fellow creature'. There is the ground of what I have called, challengingly—and I challenge anyone to question it—her extraordinary degree of moral perfection.

It is a sign of it that she never obtruded her firmly held beliefs; she preferred to render the comedy of life, though she well understood its tragedy—she had experienced it in her own most intimate life, but never once mentioned it, let alone complained. She had her own form of stoicism, a Christian stoicism. The front that she turned to society was all gaiety and fun. Of a General—'I like his rank very much, and always affix the ideas of strong sense and highly elegant manners to a General'. Nor need we be surprised at her reading, in 1813, 'a Society octavo, an **Essay on the Military Police and Institutions of the British Empire** by Captain Pasley of the Engineers . . . which I find delightfully written and highly entertaining. I am as much in love with the author as ever I was with Clarkson or Buchanan, or even the two Mr. Smiths of the City—the first soldier I ever sighed for—but he does write with extraordinary force and spirit'.

This reminds us how much wider her range of reading was than is usually appreciated. She was in fact very well read in history—a favourite from childhood—as well as in poetry, drama, and the novel, as we should expect. Nor need we be surprised that she does better than most critics in her defence of the novel, and definition of its aims, in just a paragraph of **Northanger Abbey**—after all, the best dramatic criticism in Elizabethan literature is that of the practising dramatist in **Hamlet**.

One of the best historians of the 18th century, Richard Pares—

a great admirer of Jane Austen from his schooldays at Winchester—used to tease me by saying that the England of George III was, on the whole, a greater epoch than the Elizabethan age. Well?—there is much to be said on both sides. If Elizabethan music and drama are incomparable, its painting cannot hold a candle to Gainsborough and Reynolds, Raeburn and Romney, Constable and Lawrence, in whom Jane Austen's world is depicted. Nor can the Elizabethan novel be compared with that of her day, herself its master. If in naval and military exploits they draw fairly level, no praise is too great for a Warren Hastings, who saved and welded together a great Empire—one of the most remarkable achievements in history (we have found it easy enough to throw away in a short time). The greatest achievement was perhaps the Industrial Revolution—the foundation of modern civilisation, for good or ill—which was worked out and gathering momentum throughout Jane Austen's life.

It is no reproach to her that she didn't write about it, any more than it is to Shakespeare that he didn't write about the Elizabethan Voyages. They wrote about the society they knew—it provided them with all the material they needed; she could well afford to leave the Industrial Revolution to Mrs. Gaskell and Charlotte Brontë.

I suppose, to be in the fashion, we might consider what a Marxist criticism of Jane Austen would be. A good deal of the action in the novels, socially considered, revolves round the struggle to keep up social position. Hence the concern to marry well, the importance of inheritance, settlements, etc. Otherwise you slip down the social scale; and one has to keep up appearances, one's position in other people's regard. These are the necessary concomitants of a privileged society of small gentry—an aristocracy could afford to be more regardless and free.

The niceties of class-situation are never more crisply stated than in the opening pages of *Pride and Prejudice*. The Bingley young ladies 'had been educated in one of the first private seminaries in town, had a fortune of £20,000, were in the habit of spending more than they ought, and of associating with people of rank; and were therefore in every respect entitled to think well of themselves, and meanly of others. They were of a respectable family in the north of England: a circumstance more deeply impressed on their memories than that their brother's fortune and their own had been acquired by trade.'

Similarly, the Bennets' neighbour, Sir William Lucas, 'had been formerly in trade in Meryton and risen to the honour of knighthood by an address to the King, during his mayoralty. The distinction had perhaps been felt too strongly. It had given him a disgust to his business and to his residence in a small market town; and quitting them both, he had removed to a house about a mile from Meryton, denominated from that period Lucas Lodge,

where he could think with pleasure of his own importance, and unshackled by business, occupy himself solely in being civil to all the world. For, though elated by his rank, it did not render him supercilious'.

Of course, we laugh, for we enjoy the delicious shade of irony under it all. I have never yet met a Marxist with much sense of humour, or any sense of social irony whatever. But would could be at the same time more firm, and more precise?

At the same time as the Bingley ladies had derived their wealth from trade, but in the generation before, they 'would have difficulty in believing [in regard to Mrs. Bennet's brother] that a man who lived by trade, and within view of his own warehouses, could have been so well bred and agreeable'.

We see what fools people are. No wonder Elizabeth Bennet said, 'There are few people whom I really love, and still fewer of whom I think well. The more I see of the world, the more I am dissatisfied with it; and every day confirms my belief of the inconsistency of all human characters, and of the little dependence than can be placed on the appearance of either merit or sense'.

That must have been what Jane Austen thought—as I do.

In poetry Jane Austen's world can hold its own with the Elizabethans—the age of Wordsworth, Coleridge, Scott; and Byron, Shelley, Keats were not so very much her juniors—she died so young.

Elizabethan architecture is very fine, at its best; it was challenging and experimental at the summit. But it did not achieve the classic perfection of proportion and integrated design of Georgian England. We need not bandy individual names like Adam and Soane, Nash, the Wyatts and Decimus Burton, or individual buildings like the Assembly Rooms at Bath or York, or the fantasy and exotic beauty of the Regent's pleasure-dome at Brighton. It is the **general** character achieved in Jane Austen's England that is so wonderful—and makes the heart ache to think of. In every county, practically every parish, there were going up those country houses, decent, well-proportioned, of restrained taste, sometimes magnificent palaces, often beautiful inside and out, with all their furnishings, portraits and paintings, their libraries and sculpture.

Theirs was an age of aristocratic taste: all taste is aristocratic; people in general haven't any, and never will have. All the great achievements of culture are the work of a small minority. So again it is not surprising that in a demotic age like ours they are being felled like ninepins; country houses have been destroyed in hundreds in our time, their possessions, pictures, furniture, libraries dispersed, in the social revolution of our time.

In that age, all was still on the human scale; the beauty of the English countryside was incomparable, the countryside of Constable and Turner, Cotman and Girtin. A new school of

landscape painters arose to depict its beauty, a new society of watercolour artists formed, whose exhibitions Jane Austen attended in London. We know how keen she was on Gilpin and the Picturesque; the landscape improvements that were made by the country gentry all over England, the parks and gardens they formed, the plantations and woods they planned to decorate the landscape—all this is reflected in the novels.

The charm of those English villages—church, manor-house, well-proportioned houses of professional middle-class, farms and cottages—reflected an integrated society, all on a human scale: not one grotesquely out of scale, falling apart. Similarly with the towns of the time—the terraces of Regent's Park, the old Regent Street and the Adelphi we have destroyed, the Georgian squares of London we remember, Bath and Buxton—all was in keeping. Jane Austen's Bath, with its exquisite buildings, public and private, was new—she refers to its 'white glare'; to us, it is grey and peeling, and being pulled apart.

Constable's house in Hampstead had an uninterrupted view from Westminster Abbey to Gravesend, with the dome of St. Paul's rising in the air, to remind him of Michelangelo's words on the Pantheon. Think of the skyscape of modern London—or any modern city—all confusion and chaos, all out of scale, out of scale with humanity. I remember reading that Constable, in all his life—he was Jane Austen's exact contemporary, born a year after her, but lived twenty years longer, still not old—can hardly ever have seen anything ugly, except perhaps an occasional human being. It is precisely the impression one would derive from her work.

The England that was so beautiful, with its pretty villages and small towns and cathedral cities, like Winchester—none of them large, except the capital itself, also beautiful—all on a small scale, but a society integrated and properly articulated like a body that functions well, may not perhaps have been the first country in Europe. We may leave that title generously to France, for the England of her day was the first in the world outside.

The England of Jane Austen was, as societies go, rise and fall, live and die, an efficient, highly successful, above all a **creative** society. On this day, and in our time, we salute her memory with love and gratitude—and with grief.

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Collected Reports

At the Society's annual meeting in July it has been the custom to invite a distinguished speaker to address members and their guests on a subject relating to Jane Austen – her work, her life and times. The text of their addresses will be found in four volumes:

1949 - 1965

Lord David Cecil
L. P. Hartley

Roger Fulford
Elizabeth Jenkins

John Gore
Harold Nicolson

Margaret Lane, Countess of Huntingdon

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